

A

# Thankſgiving-Sermon

FOR OUR

# DELIVERANCE

BY THE

# Prince of Orange.

Preached at LINCOLNS-INN Chappel, *January* 31. 1688.

# To the Worshipful the Masters of the Bench, and the rest of the Gentlemen of the Honourable Society of *Lincolns-Inn.*

*THough I was at first very unwilling to Expose to the Publick a* Sermon *made upon so little Warning, and so great an* Occasion ; *yet upon second thoughts I could not think it fit to resist the Unanimous and Earnest Request of so many Worthy Persons, as the* Masters *of the* Bench *of this* Honourable Society ; *to whom I stand so much indebted for your great and continued respects to me, and kind acceptance of my Labours among you for now above the space of Five and Twenty Years. In a most grateful acknowledgement whereof, this* Discourse, *such as it is, in mere Obedience to your Commands, is now humbly presented to you, by*

*Your most Obliged and*

Feb. 28. 168⅚.

*Faithful Servant,*

JOHN TILLOTSON.

SERMON

# SERMON XXXII.

## Ezra ix. 13, 14.

*And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our Iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a Deliverance as this:*
*Should we again break thy Commandments, and joyn in affinity with the people of these Abominations; wouldst not thou be angry with us till thou hast consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?*



Am sufficiently aware that the particular occasion of these *Words* is, in several respects very different from the Occasion of this Day's Solemnity. For these Words were spoken by *Ezra* at a time appointed for Publick and Solemn Humiliation. But I shall not now consider them in that relation, but rather as they refer to that Great *Deliverance* which God had so lately wrought for them; and as they are a Caution to take heed of abusing great mercies received from God; and so they are very proper and pertinent to the great Occasion of this Day. Nay these words, even in the saddest aspect, are not so unsuitable to it. For we find in *Scripture* upon the most solemn Occasions of Humiliation, that good Men have always testified a thankful sense of the goodness of God to them. And indeed, the Mercy of God doth then appear above measure merciful, when the Sinner is most deeply sensible of his own Vileness and Unworthiness. And so *Ezra* here, in the depth of their Sorrow and Humiliation, hath so great a sense of the greatness of their Deliverance, that he hardly knew how to express it; *And hast given us such a Deliverance as this.* And on the other hand, we find that good Men, in their most solemn Praises and Thanksgivings, have made very serious reflections upon their own unworthiness. And surely the best way to make Men truly thankful, is first to make them very humble. When *David* makes his most solemn acknowledgments to God for his great Mercies to him; how doth he abase himself before Him: *But who am I, and what is my people?* (1 Chron. 29. 4.) And so likewise, after he had summoned all the powers and faculties of his Soul to joyn in the Praises of God, he interposeth this seasonable meditation, *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* (Psal. 103. 10.) The greater and more lively sense we have of the goodness of God to us, the more we shall abhor our selves in dust and ashes; nothing being more apt to melt us into Tears of Repentance, than the consideration of great and undeserved Mercies vouchsafed to us. *The goodness of God* doth naturally *lead to repentance.*

Having thus reconciled the *Text* to the present *Occasion*, I shall for the more distinct handling of the *Words* take notice of these two Parts in them.

*First*, Here is a Case supposed; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds*, and *since God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve*, *and hath given us such a deliverance as this*; *should we again break his Commandments.*

*Secondly*, Here is a sentence and determination in the Case; *Wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consum'd us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping*? This is not spoken doubtfully, though it be put by way of question; but is the more vehemently positive, the more peremptorily affirmative; as if he had said, it cannot otherwise be in reason expected, but that after such repeated provocations *God should be angry with us till he had consumed us.*

I. *First*, Here is a Case supposed; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; and since God hath punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve, and hath given us such a deliverance as this: Should we again break his commandments, and joyn in affinity with the People of these abominations.* In which *Words* these following *Propositions* seem to be involv'd, which I shall but just mention, and pass to the *Second* Part of the *Text*.

1. That Sin is the cause of all our sufferings, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass. Our evil deeds* bring all other evils upon us.

2. That great Sins have usually a proportionable punishment; *after all that is come upon us*, there is the greatness of our *punishment*; *for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass*, there is the greatness of our *Sin*. But when I say that great Sins have a proportionable Punishment, I do not mean that any temporal Punishments are proportionable to the great evil of Sin; but that God doth usually observe a proportion in the temporal punishments of Sin, so that although no temporal punishment be proportionable to Sin, yet the temporal punishment of one Sin holds a proportion to the punishment of another; and consequently, lesser and greater Sins have proportionably a lesser and greater Punishment.

3. That all the Punishments which God inflicts in this Life do fall short of the demerit of our Sins; *and seeing thou our God hast punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve*. In the *Hebrew* it is, *and hast kept down our iniquities*, that is, that they should not rise up against us. The LXX. expresseth it very emphatically, *thou hast eased us of our sins*, that is, thou hast not let the whole weight of them fall upon us. Were it not for the restraints which God puts upon his anger, and the merciful mitigations of it, the Sinner would not be able to bear it, but must sink under it. Indeed it is only said in the *Text*, that the punishment which God inflicted upon the *Jews*, though it was a long Captivity, was beneath the desert of their Sins: But yet it is universally true, and *Ezra* perhaps might intend to insinuate so much, that all temporal Punishments, though never so severe, are always less than our iniquities deserve.

4. That God many times works very great Deliverances for those who are very unworthy of them; *and hast given us such a Deliverance as this*, notwithstanding *our evil deeds*, and notwithstanding *our great Trespass*.

5. That we are but too apt, even after great Judgments, and after great Mercies, to relapse into our former Sins; *should we again break thy Commandments. Ezra* insinuates that there was great reason to fear this, especially considering the strange temper of that People, who when God multiply'd

tiply'd his bleſſings upon them, were ſo apt to *wax fat and kick againſt Him*; and though he had caſt them ſeveral times into the furnace of Affliction, though they were melted for the preſent, yet they were many times but the harder for it afterwards.

6. That it is good to take notice of thoſe particular Sins which have brought the Judgments of God upon us. So *Ezra* does here; *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs*; and, *ſhould we again joyn in affinity with the People of theſe abominations.*

*Secondly*, Here is a Sentence and Determination in the Caſe; *wouldſt thou not be angry with us till thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* Which Queſtion, as I ſaid before, doth imply a ſtrong and peremptory affirmative; as if he had ſaid, after ſuch a provocation there is great reaſon to conclude that God would be angry with us till he had conſumed us. II.

From whence the *Obſervation* contained in this part of the *Text* will be this, *That it is a fearful aggravation of Sin, and a ſad preſage of ruin to a People, after great Judgments and great Deliverances, to return to Sin, and eſpecially to the ſame Sins again.* Hear how paſſionately *Ezra* expreſſes himſelf in this Caſe, *verſ.* 6. *I am aſhamed, O my God, and bluſh to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God.* Why? what was the cauſe of this great ſhame and confuſion of face? He tells us, *verſ.* 9. *for we were bondmen, yet our God hath not forſaken us in our bondage, but hath extended his mercy to us, to give us a reviving, to ſet up the Houſe of our God, and to repair the deſolations thereof, and to give us a Wall in* Judah *and in* Jeruſalem; that is, to reſtore to them the free and ſafe exerciſe of their Religion. Here was great Mercy and a mighty Deliverance indeed; and yet after this they preſently relapſed into a very great ſin, *verſe* 10. *And now, O our God, what ſhall we ſay after this? for we have forſaken thy Commandments.*

In the handling of this *Obſervation*, I ſhall do theſe *two* things.

*Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that this is a very heavy aggravation of Sin, and

*Secondly*, That it is a fatal preſage of ruin to a People.

*Firſt*, It is a heavy aggravation of Sin after great Judgments, and after ſignal Mercies and Deliverances to return to Sin, and eſpecially to the ſame Sins again. Here are *three* things to be diſtinctly ſpoken to.

1. That it is a great aggravation of Sin to return to it after great Judgments.
2. To do this after great Mercies and Deliverances.
3. After both to return to the ſame Sins again.

1. It is a great aggravation of Sin after great Judgments have been upon us to return to an evil courſe. Becauſe this is an Argument of great obſtinacy in evil. The longer *Pharaoh* reſiſted the Judgments of God, the more was his wicked heart hardned, till at laſt he arriv'd at a monſtrous degree of hardneſs; having been, as the *Text* tells us, hardned under *ten plagues*. And we find, that after God had threaten'd the People of *Iſrael* with ſeveral Judgments, he tells them, that if they *will not be reformed by all theſe things, he will puniſh them ſeven times more for their ſins*. And if the juſt God will Lev. 26. 23

in such a case punish seven times more, we may conclude that the Sin is Seven times greater.

What sad Complaints doth the *Prophet* make of the People of *Israel* growing worse for Judgments. *Ah! sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity, children that have been corrupters, a seed of evil doers.* He can hardly find words enough to express how great Sinners they were; and he adds the reason in the next *verse, Why should they be smitten any more? they will revolt more and more.* They were but the worse for Judgments. This renders them *a sinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity.* And again, *The People turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts; therefore his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.* And the same *Prophet* further complains to the same purpose, *When thy hand is lifted up they will not see.* There is a particular brand set upon King *Ahaz*, because affliction made him worse: *This is that King* Ahaz, that is, *that* grievous and notorious Sinner: And what was it that render'd him so? *In the time of his distress he sinned yet more against the Lord; this is* that *King* Ahaz, who is said to have provoked the Lord *above all the Kings of* Israel *which were before him.*

Isai. 1. 4. Verse 5. Isai. 9. 13 Isai 26. 11. 2 Chron. 28. 22.

2. It is likewise a sore aggravation of Sin, when it is committed after great Mercies and Deliverances vouchsafed to us. Because this is an argument of great ingratitude. And this we find recorded as a heavy charge upon the People of *Israel*, that *they remembred not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side; neither shewed they kindness to the House of* Jerubbaal, namely *Gideon* who had been their Deliverer, *according to all the goodness which he had shewed to* Israel. God, we see, takes it very ill at our hands, when we are ungrateful to the *Instruments* of our Deliverance; but much more, when we are unthankful to *Him* the *Author* of it. And how severely does *Nathan* the Prophet reproach *David* upon this account? *Thus said the Lord God of* Israel, *I anointed thee King over* Israel, *and deliver'd thee out of the hand of* Saul, *&c. And if this had been too little, I would moreover have done* such and such things. *Wherefore hast thou despis'd the Commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight?* God here reckons up his manifold mercies and deliverances, and aggravates *David's* Sin upon this account. And he was very angry likewise with *Solomon* for the same reason, *because he had turned from the Lord God of* Israel, *who had appear'd to him twice.* However we may slight the mercies of God, he keeps a punctual and strict account of them. It is particularly noted, as a great blot upon *Hezekiah*, that *he returned not again according to the benefits done unto him.* God takes very severe notice of all the unkind and unworthy returns that are made to Him for his Goodness.

Judges 8. 34, 35. 1 Kings 11. 9. 2 Chron. 32. 25.

Ingratitude to God is so unnatural and monstrous, that we find Him appealing against us for it to the inanimate Creatures. *Hear, O Heavens, and give ear O Earth! for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourish'd and brought up Children, but they have rebelled against me.* And then he goes on and upbraids them with the *Brute* Creatures, as being more grateful to men than men are to God. *The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass her Masters Crib, but* Israel *doth not know, my People doth not consider.* And in the same *Prophet* there is the like Complaint, *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see and be ashamed.* They that will not acknowledge the Mercies of God's Providence, shall feel the strokes of his Justice.

Isai. 1. 2. Verse 3. Isa. 26. 10

There

There is no greater evidence in the World of an intractable disposition, than not to be wrought upon by kindness, not to be melted by mercies, not to be obliged by benefits, not to be tamed by gentle usage. Nay, God expects that his mercies should lay so great an obligation upon us, that even a Miracle should not tempt us to be unthankful. *If there arise among you a Prophet*, says *Moses* to the People of *Israel*, *or a Dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder cometh to pass, whereof he spake to thee, saying, let us go after other Gods and serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet.* And he gives the reason, *because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord God of* Israel, *which brought you out of the Land of* Egypt, *and delivered you out of the House of Bondage.* Deut. 13. 1, 2. Verse 5.

3. It is a greater aggravation yet, after great Mercies and Judgments to return to the same Sins. Because this can hardly be without our sinning against knowledge, and after we are convinced how evil and bitter the Sin is which we were guilty of, and have been so sorely punish'd for before. This is an Argument of a very perverse and incorrigible temper, and that which made the Sin of the People of *Israel* so above measure sinful, that after so many signal Deliverances, and so many terrible Judgments, they fell into the same Sin of *murmuring ten times*; *murmuring* against *God* the *Author*, and against *Moses* the glorious *Instrument* of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*: which was one of the *two* great *Types* of the *Old Testament*, both of *temporal* and *spiritual Oppression* and *Tyranny*. Hear with what Resentment God speaks of the ill returns which they made to him for that great Mercy and Deliverance. *Because all these Men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in* Egypt, *and in the Wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened unto my Voice, surely they shall not see the Land which I sware to their Fathers.* And after he had brought them into the promised Land, and wrought great Deliverances for them several times, how does he upbraid them with their proneness to fall again into the same Sin of Idolatry? *And the Lord said unto the Children of* Israel, *did not I deliver you from the* Egyptians, *and from the* Amorites; *from the Children of* Ammon, *and from the* Philistins? *The* Zidonians *also and the* Amalekites *and* Maonites *did oppress you; and ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out of their Hand: yet you have forsaken me, and served other Gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more: go and cry unto the Gods which ye have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your Tribulation.* This incensed God so highly against them, that they still relaps'd into the same Sin of Idolatry after so many Afflictions and so many Deliverances. Upon such an Occasion well might the *Prophet* say, *Thine own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy Sins shall reprove thee: know therefore, that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God.* It is hardly possible but we should know that the Wickedness for which we have been so severely corrected is an evil and bitter thing. Num. 14. 22, 23. Judg. 10. 11, 12, 13. Jer. 2. 19.

Thus much for the *first part of the Observation*, namely, That it is a fearful Aggravation of Sin, after great Judgments and great Deliverances to return to Sin, and especially to the same Sins again. I proceed to the

*Second* part, namely, That this is a fatal Presage of Ruin to a People; *Should we again break thy Commandments, and joyn in affinity with the People of these Abominations, wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* And so God threatens the People of *Israel* in the *Text* which I cited before, *wherefore I will* Judg. 10. 13.

*deliver you no more. Wherefore*; that is, because they would neither be reform'd by the Afflictions wherewith God had exercised them, nor by the many wonderful Deliverances which he had wrought for them.

And there is great reason why God should deal thus with a People that continues impenitent both under the Judgments and Mercies of God.

1. Because this doth ripen the Sins of a Nation; and it is time for God to put in his Sickle when a People are ripe for ruin. When the measure of their Sins is full, it is no wonder if the Cup of his indignation begin to overflow. It is said of the *Amorites*, four hundred years before God brought that fearful ruin upon them, that God deferr'd the extirpation of them, because *the ini-*
Gen.15.16 *quity of the* Amorites *was not yet full.* When neither the Mercies nor the Judgments of God will bring us to repentance, we are then fit for destructi-
Rom.9.22. on; according to that of the *Apostle, What if God willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long suffering the Vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?* They who are not wrought upon neither by the patience of God's Mercies, nor by the patience of his Judgments, seem to be fitted and prepared, to be ripe and ready for destruction.

2. Because this incorrigible temper shews the Case of such persons to be
Isa. 1. 5. desparate and incurable, *Why should they be smitten any more?* says God of the People of *Israel, they will revolt more and more. How often would I have ga-*
Matth. 23. 37, 38. *thered you*, says *our B. Saviour* to the *Jews, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? and ye would not. Behold, your house is left to you desolate*, that is, ye shall be utterly destroyed; as it hapned forty years after to *Jerusalem*, and to the whole *Jewish* Nation.

When God sees that all the means which he can use do prove ineffectual and to no purpose, he will then give over a People, as Physicians do their Patients when they see that Nature is spent and their Case past remedy. When men will not be the better for the best means that Heaven can use, God will then leave them to reap the fruit of their own doings, and abandon them to the demerit of their Sin.

That which now remains is to apply this to our selves, and to the solemn Occasion of this Day.

And if this be our *Case*, let us take heed that this be not also our *Doom* and *Sentence*.

*First*, The *Case* in the *Text* doth very much resemble *Ours*. And that in *three* respects. God hath sent great Judgments upon us *for our evil deeds* and for our great *trespasses*: He hath *punish'd us less than our iniquities have deserv'd*: And hath *given us* a very great and wonderful *Deliverance*.

1. God hath inflicted *great Judgments* upon us *for our evil deeds, and for our great Trespasses. Great Judgments*, both for the *quality*, and for the *continuance* of them. It shall suffice only to mention those which are of a more *ancient* Date. Scarce hath any Nation been more calamitous than this of Ours, both in respect of the *Invasions* and *Conquests* of *Foreigners*, and of our own Civil and Intestine *Divisions*. *Four* times we have been *Conquer'd*; By the *Romans, Saxons, Danes*, and *Normans*. And our *intestine Divisions* have likewise been great and of long continuance. Witness the *Barons Wars*, and that long and cruel *Contest* between the *two Houses* of *York* and *Lancaster*.

But to come nearer to our *own Times*, What fearful Judgments and Calamities of *War*, and *Pestilence*, and *Fire*, have many of us seen? And how close did they follow one another? What terrible havock did the *Sword* make amongst us for many years? And this not the *Sword* of a *Foreign Enemy*, but of a *Civil War*; the mischiefs whereof were all terminated up-

on our ſelves, and have given deep wounds, and left broad ſcars upon the moſt conſiderable Families in the Nation.

*Alta manent civilis vulnera dextræ.*

This *War* was drawn out to a great length, and had a Tragical end, in the *Murther* of an excellent *King*; and in the *Baniſhment* of his *Children* into a ſtrange Country, whereby they were expoſed to the *Arts* and *Practices* of thoſe of *another* Religion; the miſchievous Conſequences whereof we have ever ſince ſadly labour'd under, and do feel them at this day.

And when God was pleas'd in great mercy at laſt to put an end to the miſerable *Diſtractions* and Confuſions of almoſt *twenty* years, by the happy *Reſtoration* of the *Royal Family*, and our *ancient Government*; which ſeem'd to promiſe to us a laſting Settlement, and all the Felicities we could wiſh: yet how ſoon was this bright and glorious Morning overcaſt, by the reſtleſs and black Deſigns of that ſure and inveterate Enemy of ours, the Church of *Rome*, for the reſtoring of their Religion amongſt us. And there was too much encouragement given to this Deſign, by thoſe who had power in their hands, and had brought home with them a ſecret good will to it.

For this *great Treſpaſs*, and for our many other Sins, God was angry with us, and ſent among us the moſt raging *Peſtilence* that ever was known in this Nation, which in the ſpace of *eight* or *nine* Months ſwept away near a third part of the Inhabitants of this vaſt and populous *City*, and of the *Suburbs* thereof; beſides a great many *thouſands* more in ſeveral parts of the Nation. *But we did not return to the Lord, nor ſeek him for all this.*

And therefore, the very next year after, God ſent a terrible and devouring *Fire*, which in leſs than *three* days time laid the greateſt part of this great *City* in aſhes. And there is too much reaſon to believe that *the Enemy* did this; *that* perpetual and implacable *Enemy* of the Peace and Happineſs of this Nation.

And even ſince the time of that dreadful Calamity, which is now above *twenty* years agone, we have been in a continual fear of the cruel Deſigns of that Party, which had hitherto been inceſſantly working under ground, but now began to ſhew themſelves more openly: and eſpecially ſince a *Prince* of that Religion ſucceeded to the Crown, our eyes have been ready to *fail us for fear, and for looking after* thoſe dreadful things that were coming upon us, and ſeem'd to be even at the door. A *fear* which this Nation could eaſily have rid it ſelf of, becauſe they that cauſed it were but a handful in compariſon of us, and could have done nothing without a foreign force and aſſiſtance; had not the Principles of Humanity, and of our Religion too, reſtrain'd us from violence and cruelty, and from every thing which had the appearance of Undutifulneſs to the Government which the Providence of God had ſet over us. An inſtance of the like patience, under the like provocations, for ſo long a time, and after ſuch viſible and open attempts upon them, when they had the Laws ſo plainly on their ſide, I challenge any Nation or Church in the World, from the very foundation of it, to produce. Inſomuch, that if God had not put it into the hearts of our kind *Neighbours*, and of that incomparable *Prince*, who laid and conducted that great Deſign with ſo much skill and ſecrecy, to have appear'd ſo ſeaſonably for our reſcue, our Patience had infallibly, without a Miracle, been our ruin. And I am ſure if our *Enemies* had ever had the like Opportunity in their hands, and had over-balanced us in numbers but half ſo much as we did them, they would never have let it ſlip; but would long ſince have extirpated us

utterly, and have *made the remembrance of us to have ceas'd from among men.*

And now if you ask me, for what Sins more especially God hath sent all these Judgments upon us? It will not, I think, become us to be very particular and positive in such determinations. Thus much is certain, That we have all sinn'd and contributed to these Judgments; every one hath had some hand, more or less, in pulling down this vengeance upon the Nation. But we are all too apt to remove the meritorious Cause of God's Judgments as far as we can from our selves, and our own Party, and upon any slight pretence to lay it upon others.

Yet I will venture to instance in *one* or *two* things which may probably enough have had a more particular and immediate hand in drawing down the Judgments of God upon us.

Our horrible Contempt of Religion on the one hand, by our *Infidelity* and *Prophaneness*; and our shameful abuse of it on the other, by our gross *Hypocrisie*, and sheltering great wickedness and immoralities under the Cloak and Profession of Religion.

And then, great *Dissensions* and Divisions, great Uncharitableness and bitterness of Spirit among those of the same Religion; so that almost from the beginning of our happy Reformation the *Enemy* had sown these *Tares*, and by the unwearied Malice and Arts of the Church of *Rome* the Seeds of Dissension were scattered very early amongst us; and a sowre humour had been fermenting in the Body of the Nation, both upon account of *Religion* and *Civil* Interests, for a long time before things broke out into a Civil War.

And more particularly yet; That which is call'd the *great Trespass* here in the *Text*, their *joyning in affinity with the People of these Abominations*, by whom they had been detain'd in a long Captivity: This, I say, seems to have had, both from the nature of the thing, and the just Judgment of God, no small influence upon a great part of the Miseries and Calamities which have befallen us. For had it not been for the countenance which *Popery* had by the *Marriages* and *Alliances* of our *Princes*, for two or three Generations together, with those of *that* Religion, it had not probably had a continuance among us to this day. Which will, I hope, now be a good warning to those, who have the Authority to do it, to make effectual provision by Law for the prevention of the like inconvenience and mischief in this Nation for ever.

2. Another *Parallel* between our Case and that in the *Text*, is, That *God hath punish'd us less than our iniquities did deserve.* And this acknowledgment we have as much reason to make for our selves, as *Ezra* had to do it in behalf of the *Jews*; *Thou our God hast punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve.* Thou, our *God*, hast punish'd us; there is the reason of so much mercy and mitigation. It is *God*, and not *Man*, with whom we have to do; and therefore it is, that we *the children of men are not consumed.* And it is *our* God likewise, to whom we have a more peculiar relation, and with whom, by virtue of our Profession of *Christianity*, we are in *Covenant*: Thou *our* God hast punish'd us less than our Iniquities deserve. *He* might justly have *pour'd forth all his wrath*, and have made *his jealousie to have smoak'd against us*, and have *blotted out the remembrance of us from under Heaven: He* might have *given us up to the will of our Enemies*, and into the hands of those *whose tender mercies are cruelty*: He might have *brought us into the net* which they had spread for us, and have *laid* a terrible load of *affliction upon our loins*, and suffer'd insolent *men to ride over our heads*, and *them that hated us* with a perfect hatred, to have *had the rule over us*: But he was graciously pleas'd to *remember mercy in the midst of judgment*, and to *repent himself for his servants, when he saw that their power was gone*, and that

things

things were come to that extremity, that we were in all humane probability utterly unable to have wrought out our own Deliverance.

3. The last *Parallel* between *our* Case, and *that* in the *Text*, is the great and wonderful *Deliverance* which God hath wrought for us. And whilst I am speaking of this, *God is my witness, whom I serve in the Gospel of his Son,* that I do not say one word upon this Occasion in flattery to men, but in true thankfulness to Almighty God, and constrain'd thereto from a just sense of his great mercy to us all, in this marvellous Deliverance, in this *mighty Salvation which he wrought for us.* So that we may say with *Ezra, Since thou our God hast given us such a Deliverance as T H I S* : So great, that we know not how to compare it with any thing but it *Self. God* hath *given us this Deliverance.* And therefore, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy Name be the praise.* For thou knowest, and we are all conscious to our selves, that we did in no wise deserve it; but quite the contrary. *God* hath *given* it, and it ought to be so much the welcomer to us, for coming from such a Hand. *It is the Lord's doing*, and therefore ought to be the more *marvellous in our eyes.* It is a Deliverance full of *Mercy*, and I had almost said, full of *Miracle. The finger of God* was visibly in it; and there are plain Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate Divine interposition. And if we will not *wisely consider the Lord's doings*, we have reason to stand in awe of that Threatning of *His, Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.* Psal.

It was a wonderful *Deliverance* indeed, if we consider all the Circumstances of it: The *Greatness* of it; and the *strangeness* of the *Means* whereby it was brought about; and the *Suddenness* and *Easiness* of it.

The *Greatness* of it; it was a great Deliverance, from the greatest Fears, and from the greatest Dangers; the apparent and imminent Danger of the saddest Thraldom and *Bondage, Civil* and *Spiritual*; both of *Soul* and *Body.*

And it was brought about in a very *extraordinary* manner, and by very *strange* means: Whether we consider the *greatness* and *difficulty* of the Enterprise; or the closeness and *secresy* of the Design, which must of necessity be communicated at least to the *Chief* of those who were to assist and engage in it: Especially the *Estates* of the *United Provinces*, who were then in so much danger themselves, and wanted more than their own Forces for their own Defence and Security: a kindness never to be forgotten by the *English* Nation. And besides all this, the difficulties and disappointments which happen'd, after the Design was open and manifest, from the uncertainties of *Wind* and *Weather*, and many other *Accidents* impossible to be foreseen and prevented. And yet in Conclusion a strange concurrence of all things on all sides, to bring the thing which the Providence of God intended to a happy issue and effect.

And we must not here forget the many *Worthies* of our *Nation*, who did so generously run all hazards of Life and Fortune, for the preservation of our *Religion*, and the asserting of our ancient *Laws* and *Liberties.*

These are all strange and unusual means; but which is stranger yet, the very counsels and methods of our Enemies did prepare the way for all this, and perhaps more effectually, than any counsel and contrivance of our own could have done it. For even the *Jesuites*, those formal *Politicians* by *Book* and *Rule*, without any consideration or true knowledge of the temper, and interest, and other circumstances of the People they were designing upon, and had to deal withal; and indeed without any care to know them: I say, the *Jesuits*, who for so long a time, and for so little reason,

have

have affected the reputation of the deepest and craftiest *States-men* in the World, have upon this great Occasion, and when their whole *Kingdom of Darkness* lay at stake, by a more than ordinary *infatuation* and *blindness*, so outwitted and over-reach'd themselves in their own Counsels, that they have really contributed as much, or more, to our Deliverance from the Destruction which they had designed to bring upon us, than all our wisest and best Friends could have done.

And then, if we consider further, how *sudden* and surprising it was, so that we could hardly believe it when it was accomplish'd: and like the Children of *Israel*, *when the Lord turned again the Captivity of* Zion, *we were like them that dream.* When all things were driving on furiously, and in great haste, then God gave an unexpected check to the Designs of men, and stop'd them in their full *cariere.* Who among us could have imagin'd, but a few Months ago, so happy and so speedy an end of our fears and troubles? God hath at once scatter'd all our fears, and outdone all our hopes by the greatness and suddenness of our Deliverance. *O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

And *lastly*, If we consider the cheapness and easiness of this Deliverance. All this was done without a *Battel*, and almost without *Blood.* All the danger is, lest we should loath it, and grow sick of it, because it was so very easie. Had it come upon harder terms, and had we waded to it through a *Red Sea* of Blood, we would have valued it more. But this surely is great wantonness, and whatever we think of it, one of the highest provocations imaginable: For there can hardly be a fouler and blacker Ingratitude towards Almighty God, than to slight so great a Deliverance, only because it came to us so easily, and hath cost us so very cheap.

I will mention but one Circumstance more, which may not be altogether unworthy our observation. That God seems in this Last Deliverance, in some sort to have united and brought together all the great Deliverances which He hath been pleas'd to work for this *Nation* against all the remarkable attempts of Popery, from the beginning of our *Reformation.* Our wonderful Deliverance from the formidable *Spanish Invasion* design'd against us, happen'd in the Year 1588. And now just a *hundred* years after, God was pleased to bring about this *last* great and most happy Deliverance. That horrid *Gunpowder Conspiracy*, without *Precedent*, and without *Parallel*, was design'd to have been executed upon the *Fifth* Day of *November*; the same Day upon which his *Highness* the *Prince of Orange* landed the *Forces* here in *England* which he brought hither for our Rescue. So that this is a *Day* every way worthy to be solemnly set apart and joyfully celebrated by this *Church* and *Nation*, throughout all Generations; as the fittest of all other to comprehend, and to put us in mind to commemorate all the great Deliverances which God hath wrought for Us, from *Popery*, and its inseparable Companion, *Arbitrary Power.* And we may *then* say with the *Holy Psalmist*, *This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the Day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoyce and be glad in it.* (Psal. 118. 23, 24.)

*Secondly*, As the *Case* in the *Text* is much like *Ours*, so let us take heed that the *Doom* and *Sentence* there be not so too. *If after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, and since God hath punish'd us less than our iniquities* did *deserve*; *should we again break* his *Commandments, and joyn in affinity with the People of these Abominations, would* He *not be angry with us till he had consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* What could we in reason expect after all this, but utter ruin and destruction?

destruction? We may here apply, as St. *Paul* does, God's Dealing with the People of *Israel*, to the Times of the *Gospel*; for he speaks of it as an *Example* and *Admonition* to all Ages to the end of the World. *Now these things*, 1 Cor. 10.
says the *Apostle*, *were our Examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil* 6, 7, 9, 10,
*things, as they also lusted; Neither be ye Idolaters, as were some of them*, &c. 11.
*Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of Serpents.* For the explication of this *passage* we must have recourse to the History, which gives this account of it. *And the People spake against* God, Numb. 21.
*and against* Moses, *Wherefore have ye brought us up out of* Egypt, *to die in the* 5, 6.
*Wilderness?* &c. impeaching *God* and his Servant *Moses*, as if by this Deliverance they had put them into a much worse condition than they were in when they were in *Egypt*. *And the Lord sent fiery Serpents among the People, and they bit the People, and much People of* Israel *died.* But how was this a *tempting of Christ? Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted*; that is, let not us, now under the *Gospel*, tempt *our Saviour* and *Deliverer*, as the *Israelites* did *theirs*, by slighting that great Deliverance, and by *speaking against* God, *and against Moses. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer.* And how far this may concern Us, and all others, to *the end of the World*, who shall tempt *Christ*, the great *Patron* and *Deliverer* of his Church, and *murmur* without cause, as the *Israelites* did, at the Deliverances which He works for them, and against the *Instruments* of it, the *Apostle* tells us in the next words: *Now all these* V. 11.
*things happened unto them for Ensamples*, or Types; *and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the World are come. Let us not tempt Christ*; *who* is now beginning the Glorious Deliverance of his *Church* from the Tyranny of *Antichrist*.

To draw now towards a Conclusion; I will comprehend my Advice to you upon the whole matter, in as few words as I can.

Let us use this great *Deliverance* which God hath given us, [*such a Deliverance as this*] *from our Enemies, and from the Hand of all that hate us*; not by using Them as they would have done Us, had we fallen under their Power, with great Insolence, and Rage, and Cruelty; but with great Moderation and Clemency, making as few Examples of Severity as will be consistent with our future security from the like Attempts upon our *Religion* and *Laws*: And even in the Execution of *Justice* upon the greatest *Offenders*, let us not give so much countenance to the ill *Examples* which have been set of *Extravagant Fines* and *Punishments*, as to imitate those Patterns which with so much reason we abhor; no, not in the Punishment of the *Authors* of them.

And let us endeavour, for once, to be so wise, as not to forfeit the fruits of this *Deliverance*, and to hinder our selves of the benefit and advantage of it, by Breaches and Divisions among our selves. As we have no reason to desire it, so I think we can hardly ever hope to understand *Popery* better, and the Cruel Designs of it, than we do already, both from the long Trial and Experience which we have had of it in this *Nation*, and likewise from that dismal and horrid View which hath of late been given us of the true Spirit and Temper of it in *One* of our Neighbour *Nations*, which hath long pretended to the Profession of the most refin'd and *moderate Popery* in the World; but hath now at last shewed it self in its true Colours, and in the perfection of a persecuting Spirit; and have therein given us a most sad and deplorable *Instance*, of a *Religion* corrupted and degenerated into that which, if it be possible, is worse than *None*.

And since, by the undeserved Mercy of God to us, we have, upon such easie terms in comparison, escap'd their Rage and Fury; let us now

at length resolve, never to *joyn in Affinity with the People of these Abominations*; since our *Alliances* with them by *Marriage* have had so fatal an Influence, both upon the *publick Peace* and Tranquility of the *Nation*, and upon the Welfare also of *private Families.* I have known *Many* Instances of this kind, but hardly ever yet saw *One* that prov'd happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to those *Protestant* Families in which such unequal, and, as I think, unlawful *Matches* have been made: Not that such *Marriages* are void in themselves, but yet for all that sinful; because of the apparent Danger and Temptation to which those of our *Church* and *Religion* that enter into them do evidently expose themselves, of being seduc'd from their Religion; not by the good Arguments which the other can offer to that purpose, but by the ill Arts which they have the Confidence and the Conscience to make use of in the making of *Proselytes.*

And let us pay our most hearty and thankful Acknowledgments, chiefly and in the first place to *Almighty God*, the blessed *Author* of this *Deliverance*, and under *Him*, to that happy *Instrument*, whom God hath been pleased, in great pity to this sinful and unworthy *Nation*, to raise up on purpose for it, his Highness the Prince of *Orange*; and to that end did in his All-wise Providence lay the Foundation of our then future *Deliverance*, in that *auspicious Match* which was concluded here in *England*, about eleven years ago, between this Renowned *Prince* and our Excellent *Princess.*

This is that most Illustrious House of *Nassau* and *Orange*, which God hath so highly honoured *above all the Families* of the Earth to give a Check to the *Two* Great aspiring *Monarchies* of the *West*, and bold *Attempters* upon the *Liberties* of *Europe*: To the *One*, in the last Age; and to the *Other*, in the present. As if the *Princes* of this Valiant and Victorious *Line* had been of the *Race* of *Hercules*, born to rescue Mankind from Oppression, and to quell Monsters.

And *lastly*, let us beseech Almighty God, all whose Ways and Works are perfect, That he would *establish that which he hath wrought*, and still carry it on to further and greater Perfection. Which, after such an *Earnest* of his Favour and Good Will to us, we have no reason to doubt but that he is ready to do for us; if by our own *fickleness* and *inconstancy*, disgusting the Deliverance now it is come, which we so earnestly desired before it came; if by our ingrateful *Murmurings* and *Discontents*, by our own foolish *Heats* and *Animosities*, kindled and carried on by the ill designs of some, working upon the tenderness and scruples of others, under the specious pretences of *Conscience* and *Loyalty*: I say, if by *some* or *all* these ways we do not refuse the Blessing which God now offers, and defeat and frustrate the merciful Design of this wonderful Revolution; God will still *rejoyce over us, to do us good,* and *think thoughts of Peace towards us, thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give us an expected end* of our long Troubles and Confusions.

But if we will *not know, in this our day, the things which belong to our Peace*, our Destruction will then be of our selves; and there will be no need that *God* should be *angry with us*, for we shall be undone by our own Differences and Quarrels about the Way and Means of our being saved; and so *be angry with* one another *till we be consumed.* Which God, of his infinite Goodness, give us all the Grace and Wisdom to prevent; for his Mercies sake, in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with Thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and ever. *Amen.*

# SERMON XXXIII.

## *Of Forgiveness of Injuries, and against Revenge.*

Preached before the Queen at *WHITEHALL*, March 8. 168$^{8}_{9}$.

Matthew v. 44.

*But I say unto you, love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.*



THE *Gospel* hath promised forgiveness of Sins to us upon *two* Conditions; That we sincerely repent of the Sins which we have committed against God; and, That we heartily forgive to men the Injuries and Offences which they have been guilty of towards us.

I shall at this time, by God's Assistance, treat of the latter of these, from the *Words* which I have recited to you; which are part of our *Saviour's* excellent *Sermon upon the Mount*. In which he doth not only explain, but enlarge and perfect the Moral and Natural Law, by adding to it *Precepts* and *Prohibitions* of greater perfection, than either the Law of *Moses* or the *Natural Law*, in their largest extent, did contain.

He forbids *Polygamy*, and *Divorce* except only in case of *Adultery*; and likewise *Revenge*; none of which were forbidden either by the *Law* of *Nature*, or by the *Law* which was given by *Moses*.

And to these *Prohibitions* our *Blessed Saviour* adds several new *Precepts* of greater perfection than any Laws that were extant before. *But I say unto you, love your enemies.* The *Jewish* Law commanded them to *love their Neighbour*, meaning their Brethren and those of their own Nation: But our *Saviour*, by commanding us *to love our enemies*, hath in the most emphatical manner that can be commanded us to love *all men*. For if any were to be excluded from our Charity, none so likely to be so as our Enemies. So that after a command to love our Enemies it was needless to name any others because men are naturally apt to love those that love them.

*I say unto you, love your enemies*; here the inward affection is requir'd. *Bless them that curse you*; here outward Civility and Affability are requir'd, in opposition to rude and uncivil Language; for so *blessing* and *cursing* do in *Scripture* frequently signifie. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindness are commanded to be done by us to our bitterest and most malicious Enemies. *Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* These are the highest expressions of Enmity that can be, *calumny* and *cruelty*; and yet we are commanded to pray for those that touch us in these *two* tenderest Points of all other, our *Reputation* and our *Life*. And to secure the sincerity of our Charity towards our Enemies, we are requir'd to express it

by our hearty Prayers to God for them: *To God*, I ſay, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to diſſemble; and from whom we can expect no mercy for our ſelves, if with feigned Lips we beg it of Him for others.

You ſee what is the Duty here requir'd; That we bear a ſincere affection to our moſt malicious and implacable Enemies, and be ready upon occaſion to give real teſtimony of it.

And becauſe this may ſeem a hard duty, and not ſo eaſie to be reconciled either to our Inclination or our Reaſon; I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this Law is not only reaſonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the practice of it more eaſie and delightful, and upon all accounts much more for our benefit and advantage, than the contrary: And that upon *four* Conſiderations; which I ſhall endeavour to repreſent with their juſt advantage, and ſo as may, I hope, not only convince our Judgments of the reaſonableneſs of this Precept, but likewiſe bend and ſway our Wills to the obedience and practice of it.

I. If we conſider the nature of the *act* here requir'd, which is to *Love*; which when it is not a meer Paſſion, but under the government of our Reaſon, is the moſt natural, and eaſie, and delightful of all the Affections which God hath planted in Humane Nature: Whereas *ill-will*, and *hatred*, and *revenge*, are very troubleſome and vexatious Paſſions. Both the deviſing of miſchief, and the accompliſhment of it, and the reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneaſie: and the conſequences of it many times pernicious to our ſelves. The very deſign of Revenge is troubleſome, and puts the Spirits into an unnatural fermentation and tumult. The man that meditates it is always reſtleſs, his very ſoul is ſtung, ſwells and boils, is in pain and anguiſh, hath no eaſe, no enjoyment of it ſelf ſo long as this Paſſion reigns. The execution of it may perhaps be attended with ſome preſent pleaſure, but that pleaſure is unreaſonable and brutiſh, momentary and ſhort, like a flaſh of Lightning, which vaniſheth in the twinkling of an Eye.

It is commonly ſaid that Revenge is ſweet, but to a calm and conſiderate mind, Patience and Forgiveneſs are ſweeter, and do afford a much more rational and ſolid and durable pleaſure than Revenge. The Monuments of our Mercy and Goodneſs are a far more pleaſing and delightful ſpectacle, than of our Rage and Cruelty. And no ſort of thought does uſually haunt men with more terror, than the reflection upon what they have done in way of Revenge.

Beſides that the conſequences of this Paſſion do commonly prove very prejudicial to our ſelves. For the Revenge of one Injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the ſame reaſon to a new Revenge of *them*; and this brings on a perpetual and endleſs circulation of Injuries and Revenges. So that whoever ſeeks Revenge upon another doth commonly in the iſſue take it upon himſelf, and whilſt he thinks to transfer the Injury which he hath received from him that did it, he doubles it upon himſelf.

Such, and ſo great are the troubles and inconveniencies of a malicious and revengeful temper: but *there is no torment in Love*, as St. *John* excellently ſays. To be kindly affection'd towards all, to bear no grudge or ill-will, no thought of diſpleaſure or revenge towards any man, is the eaſieſt poſture, the moſt pleaſant ſtate of the Mind. So that if not for their ſakes, yet for our own, we ſhould *Love our Enemies, and do good to them that hate us*; becauſe to be thus affected towards all men, is as great a kindneſs to our ſelves as it is charity to others.

II. If

II. If we conſider the qualification of the *Object*; it is *our Enemy* whom we are requir'd *to Love*. In whom though there be ſomething that is juſtly diſguſtful, yet there is ſomething alſo that is lovely; and if we perſiſt in our kindneſs to him, notwithſtanding his enmity to us, the enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a ſincere and firm friendſhip.

'Tis true indeed, that with regard to our ſelves perſonal enmity towards us is one of the moſt inconvenient qualities that a man can have, but not therefore the worſt in it ſelf. If we could be impartial and lay aſide prejudice, we might perhaps diſcern ſeveral very lovely qualities in him who hates us: And Virtue is to be own'd, and prais'd, and lov'd, even in an Enemy. And perhaps his enmity towards us is not ſo great and inexcuſable a fault, as we apprehend; he is not perhaps our Enemy to that degree, nor ſo altogether without cauſe, as we imagine; poſſibly we have provok'd him, or by his own miſtake, or through the malicious repreſentation of others, he may be induc'd to think ſo: And are not we our ſelves liable to the like miſapprehenſions concerning others? of which we are many times afterwards convinc'd and aſham'd: and ſo may he, and then his enmity will ceaſe, if we will but have a little patience with him, as we always wiſh in the like caſe that others would have with us.

At the worſt, though never ſo ſore and cauſeleſs an Enemy, though never ſo bad a Man, yet he is a Man, and as ſuch, hath ſomething in him which the blindeſt Paſſion cannot deny to be good and amiable. He hath the ſame Nature with our ſelves, which we cannot hate, or deſpiſe, without hatred and contempt of our ſelves. Let a Man's faults be what they will, they do not deſtroy his Nature, and make him ceaſe to be a Man.

The *two* great Foundations of *Love* are *Relation* and *Likeneſs*. *No one thing*, ſays *Tully*, *is ſo like; ſo equal to another, as one man is to another.* What difference ſoever there may be between us and another man, yea, though he be our Enemey, yet he is ſtill like us in the main; and perhaps, but too like us in that for which we find ſo much fault with him, a proneneſs to offer affronts and injuries.

And there is an eſſential *Relation*, as well as *Likeneſs*, between one man and another; which nothing can ever diſſolve, becauſe it is founded in that which no man can diveſt himſelf of, in *Humane Nature*. So far is it from being true, which Mr. *Hobbs* aſſerts as the fundamental *Principle* of his *Politicks*, *That men are naturally in a ſtate of War and Enmity with one another*; that the contrary *Principle*, laid down by a much deeper and wiſer man, I mean *Ariſtotle*, is moſt certainly true, *That men are naturally akin and friends to each other*. Some unhappy accidents and occaſions may make men Enemies, but *naturally every man is friend to another*: and that is the ſureſt and moſt unalterable reaſon of things which is founded in Nature, not that which ſprings from mutable accidents and occaſions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the notion of a *Man*, ought not to be look'd upon by us, and treated as an Enemy. Dr. *Barrow*

Conſider farther that an Enemy, even whilſt he is exerciſing his enmity towards us, may do us many acts of real advantage; which though they do not proceed from kindneſs, yet in truth are benefits. The malicious Cenſures of our Enemies, if we make a right uſe of them, may prove of greater advantage to us, than the Civilities of our beſt Friends. We can eaſily afford, nay the wiſeſt Men can hardly forbear, to love a *Flatterer*; to embrace him, and to take him into our boſom; and yet an open *Enemy* is a thouſand times better and leſs dangerous than *he*. It is good for many men that they have had Enemies, who have many times been to them the happy

occaſion

occasion of reforming those faults, which none but an Enemy would have taken the freedom, I had almost said would have had the Friendship, to have told them of.

But what if after all, this Enemy of ours, this hated man, prove to be one of our best Friends? For so reconciled Enemies usually are. And if any thing will reconcile an Enemy, Love and Kindness will. An obstinate goodness is apt to conquer even the worst of Men. It is hardly in the nature of man to withstand the kindness of one whom, by all that we could do, we have not been able to make our enemy. After a man hath done the greatest injury to another, not only to find no revenge following upon it, but the first opportunity taken to oblige him, is so very surprizing, that it can hardly fail to gain upon the worst disposition, and to melt down the hardest temper. So that we should love our Enemies, if not for what they are at present, yet for what they may be, and in hope that by these means they may in time become our Friends.

III. If we consider the Excellency and Generosity of the thing it self. *To love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us*, is the perfection of goodness, and the advancement of it to its highest pitch. It is the most excellent and perfect act of the greatest and most perfect of all Graces and Virtues, I mean *Charity*; which by St. *Paul* is call'd *the bond of perfection*; and by St. *James*, *the perfect* and *the Royal Law*: because it inspires men with a greatness of Mind fit for Kings and Princes, in whom nothing is more admirable than a generous Goodness and Clemency, even towards great Enemies and Offenders, so far as is consistent with the Publick Good. Love for love is but Justice and Gratitude; Love for no love is favour and kindness; but Love for hatred and enmity is a most Divine Temper, a steady and immutable Goodness that is not to be stirr'd by provocation, and so far from being conquer'd, that it is rather confirm'd by its contrary: For if Hatred and Enmity do not extinguish Love, what can? This is Goodness indeed; not only without Merit and Obligation, without Invitation or Motive; but against all reasonable expectation, and in despite of all Temptation and Provocation to the contrary.

So that to return good for evil and love for hatred, is one of the greatest arguments of a great Mind, and of deep wisdom and consideration: For naturally our *first* inclinations and thoughts towards our Enemies are full of Anger and Revenge; but our *second* and wiser thoughts will tell us, that Forgiveness is much more generous than Revenge. And a more glorious Victory cannot be gain'd over another man than this, that when the Injury began on his part, the Kindness should begin on ours. If both the ways were equally in our power, yet it is a much more desirable Conquest to *overcome evil with good*, than with *evil*. By *this*, we can only Conquer our Enemy, and may perhaps fail in that; but by the *other*, we certainly Conquer our selves, and perhaps our Enemy too; overcoming him in the noblest manner, and walking him gently till he be cool, and without force effectually subduing him to be our Friend. This, as *One* fitly compares it, is like a great and wise *General*, by Art and Stratagem, by meer dint of Skill and Conduct, by Patience and wise delay; without ever striking a stroke, or shedding one drop of blood, to vanquish an Enemy, and to make an end of the War without ever putting it to the hazard of a Battel.

Dr Barrow.

Revenge is blind and rash, and does always proceed from impotency and weakness of Mind. 'Tis Anger that spurs men on to it; and Anger is certainly one of the foolishest Passions of Humane Nature, and which commonly

ly betrays men to the most imprudent and unreasonable things. So *Solomon* Pro. 14. 29.
observes, *He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly*; and again, *Anger resteth in* Eccles. 7. 9.
*the bosom of fools*: But to be able to bear provocation, is an argument of
great Wisdom; and to forgive it, of a great Mind: So the same *Wise-man*
tells us, *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his* Pro. 16. 32.
*spirit, than he that taketh a City.* It is a greater thing, in case of great Provocation, to calm a man's own spirit, than to storm and take a strong City.

Whereas the Angry Man loseth and lets fall the government of himself, and lays the Reins upon the neck of the *Wild Beast*, his own brutish Appetite and Passion; which hurries him on first to Revenge, and then to Repentance for the folly which he hath been guilty of in gratifying so unreasonable a Passion. For it very seldom happens that any man executes an act of Revenge, but the very next moment after he hath done it, he is sorry for it, and wisheth he had not done it: Whereas Patience and Forgiveness do wisely prevent both the mischief to others, and the trouble to our selves, which is usually consequent upon Revenge.

IV. If we consider the perfection and prevalency of the *Examples* which the *Gospel* proposeth to us, to allure and engage us to the practice of this Duty. And they are the *Examples* of *God* himself, and of the *Son of God* in the Nature of Man.

1. The Example of *God* himself. The *Scripture* doth frequently set before us the goodness of God's common Providence to Sinners, for our Pattern. And this is the Argument whereby our Blessed *Saviour* presseth the Duty in the *Text* upon us, in the *Verse* immediately after it; *That ye may be the* Verse 45.
*children of your heavenly Father, who maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his Rain to fall on the just and the unjust.* The same Argument *Seneca* also urgeth to the same purpose. *How many* (says he) *are unworthy of the light, and yet the Day visits them?* And speaking of the *Gods, They bestow* (says he) *their benefits upon the unthankful, and are ready to help those who make a bad construction* and use *of their kindness.* And almost in the very words of our *Saviour*, *Etiam sceleratis Sol oritur*, &c. *The Sun riseth even upon the most vile and profligate persons, and the Seas are open to Pirates.*

Thus is God affected towards those who are guilty of the greatest provocations towards Him. He bestows upon them the gifts of his Common Providence; and not only so, but is ready to forgive innumerable Offences to them for *Christ's* sake. This Pattern the *Apostle* proposeth to our imitation,
*Be ye kind, tender hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even* Eph. 4. 32.
*as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*: *Be ye therefore imitaters of God as* Chap. 5. 1.
*dear children.* This temper and disposition of Mind, is the prime excellency and perfection of the Divine Nature; and who would not be ambitious to be like the most perfect and best of Beings? And so our *B. Saviour* concludes this Argument, in the last *Verse* of this *Chapter*, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, which St. *Luke* renders, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful.* So that in that very thing which we think to be so hard and difficult, you see that we have Perfection it self for our Pattern. And this *Example* ought to be of so much greater force with us, by how much greater reason there is, why *we* should do thus to one another, than why *God* should do thus to us. Our Offences against God are more and greater, than any man ever was or could be guilty of towards us: Besides, that there are many Considerations which ought to tye up our hands, and may reasonably restrain us from falling furiously upon one another, which can have no place at all in God. We

may

may justly fear, that the consequence of our Revenge may return upon our selves, and that it may come to be our own case to stand in need of Mercy and Forgiveness from others: And therefore out of necessary caution and prudence, we should take heed not to set any bad example in this kind, lest it should recoil upon our selves. We who stand so much in need of forgiveness our selves, ought in all reason to be very easie to forgive others. But now the Divine Nature is infinitely above any real injury or suffering. God can never stand in need of pity or forgiveness; and yet of his own meer Goodness, without any interest or design, how *slow* is he to *anger*, and how *ready to forgive*?

And which comes yet nearer to us, there is also the *Example* of the *Son of God*, our *Blessed Saviour*; who in our Nature, and in case of the greatest Injuries and Provocations imaginable, did practise this Virtue to the height: And all this for our *sakes*, as well as for our *Example*. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himself submitted to with the greatest Patience and Constancy of Mind, in our *stead*, and wholly for our advantage.

He *render'd good for evil* to all Mankind, and shew'd greater *Love* to us, whilst we were Enemies to Him, than ever any man did to his Friend.

He *pray'd* for those *that despitefully used him and persecuted him*. And this, not upon cool consideration, after the injury was done, and the pain of his Sufferings was over; but whilst the sense and smart of them was upon him, and in the very agony and bitterness of Death: In the height of all his anguish, he pour'd out his Soul an Offering for the Sins of Men, and his Blood a Sacrifice to God, for the expiation of the Guilt of that very Sin whereby they shed it; pleading with God, in the behalf of his Murderers, the only Excuse that was possible to be made for their *Malice*, that is, their *Ignorance*; and spending his last breath in that most charitable Prayer for them, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*.

The last Declaration which he made of his mind, was *Love* to his *Enemies*; and the last Legacy he bequeath'd was an earnest Request to God for the *Forgiveness* of his *Persecutors* and *Murderers*.

So that if any *Example* ought to be dear to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our *Blessed Saviour* should; since the Injuries which he suffer'd have saved us from suffering, and the greatest *Blessing* and *Happiness* that ever befel Mankind is due to this excellent *Example*: And then with what Confidence, nay with what Conscience, can we pretend to share in the Benefits of this Example, without imitating the Vertues of it?

Can we seriously contemplate the excessive Kindness and Charity of the Son of God to the sinful Sons of Men, after all our bitterest Enmity towards him, and most cruel and injurious Usage of him; and all this Charity exercis'd towards us, whilst he was under the actual sense and suffering of these things: and yet not be provok'd by an Example so admirable in it self, and of such mighty advantage to us, *to go and do likewise*?

But notwithstanding the power of these *Arguments* to perswade to this *Duty*, I must not dissemble some *Objections* which are, I believe in many of your minds against it; and to which for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give some satisfaction. And they are these:

1. That this Precept in the *Text* does not seem so well to agree with another of our *Blessed Saviour's*, in another *Evangelist*, *If thy Brother trespass* (Luke 17. 3, 4.) *against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive them.* Here our *Blessed Saviour* seems not

to

to require Forgivenefs, unlefs he that hath done the Injury declare his Repentance for it: but the *Text* plainly requires us to forgive thofe who are fo far from repenting of their Enmity, that they ftill purfue it, and exercife it upon us. Thus our *Lord* teacheth us, and thus *He* himfelf practifed towards his *Perfecutors*.

But this appearance of Contradiction will quickly vanifh, if we confider that *Forgivenefs* is fometimes taken chiefly *for abftaining from Revenge*; and fo far we are to forgive our Enemies, even whilft they continue fo, and though they do not repent: And not only fo, but we are alfo to pray for them, and to do good offices to them, efpecially of common Humanity: and this is the meaning of the Precept in the *Text*. But fometimes *Forgivenefs* does fignifie a *perfect Reconciliation* to thofe that have offended us,fo as to take them again into our *Friendfhip*; which they are by no means fit for, till they have repented of their Enmity, and laid it afide. And this is plainly the meaning of the *other Text*.

2. It is further objected, That this feems to be a very imprudent thing, and of dangerous confequence to our felves; becaufe by bearing one Injury fo patiently, and forgiving it fo eafily, we invite more; and not only tempt our Enemy to go on, but others alfo by his Example to do the like: Which will make ill natur'd Men to provoke us on purpofe, with a crafty defign to wreft benefits from us: For what better Trade can a man drive, than to gain Benefits in exchange for Injuries?

To this I anfwer *three* things:

*Firft*, It is to be feared that there are but few fo very good, as to make this kind return for Injuries: Perhaps, of thofe that call themfelves *Chriftians*, not one in a hundred. And he is not a cunning man that will venture to make an Enemy, when there is the odds of a hundred to one againft him, that this Enemy of his will take the firft opportunity to take his Revenge upon him.

*Secondly*, It is alfo on the other hand to be hoped, that but very few are fo prodigioufly bad, as to make fo barbarous a return for the unexpected kindnefs of a generous Enemy. And this is encouragement enough to the practice of this Duty, if there be a probable hope that it will have a good effect; and however, if it fhould fall out otherwife, yet this would not be reafon enough to difcourage our goodnefs, efpecially fince the kindnefs which we do to our Friends is liable almoft to an equal Objection, that they may prove ungrateful, and become our Enemies: it having been often feen that great Benefits, and fuch as are beyond requital, inftead of making a man more a Friend have made him an Enemy.

*Thirdly*, Our *Saviour* never intended by this Precept, that our goodnefs fhould be blind and void of all prudence and difcretion, but that it fhould be fo managed, as to make our Enemy fenfible both of his own fault, and of our favour; and fo, as to give him as little encouragement, as there is reafon for it, to hope to find the like favour again upon the like provocation. Our *Saviour* commands us to do the thing, but hath left it to our prudence to do it in fuch a manner as may be moft effectual, both to reclaim the Offender, and likewife to fecure our felves againft future and further Injuries.

3. *Laftly*, It is objected, What can we do more to our beft Friends, than to love them and blefs them, than to do good to them and to pray for them? And are we then to make no difference betwixt our Enemies and our Friends?

Yes furely; and fo we may, notwithftanding this Precept: For there are degrees of Love, and there are Benefits of feveral rates and fizes. Thofe

of the firſt rate we may with reaſon beſtow upon our Friends, and with thoſe of a ſecond or third rate there is all the reaſon in the World why our Enemies ſhould be very well contented. Beſides that we may abſtain from Revenge, yea, and love our Enemy, and wiſh him and do him good; and yet it will not preſently be neceſſary that we ſhould take him into our boſom, and treat and truſt him as our intimate and familiar Friend. For every one that is not our Enemy is not fit to be our Friend; much leſs one that hath been our Enemy, and perhaps is ſo ſtill. There muſt be a great change in him that hath been our Enemy, and we muſt have had long experience of him, before it will be fit, if ever it be ſo, to take him into our Friendſhip.

All that now remains is to make ſome *Inferences* from the Diſcourſe which I have made upon this Argument, by way of Application. And they ſhall be theſe *four*:

I. I. If we think it ſo very difficult to demean our ſelves towards our Enemies, as the *Chriſtian* Religion doth plainly require us to do; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them, and to do good offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in prudence to be very careful how we make Enemies to our ſelves. One of the firſt Principles of Humane Wiſdom, in the conduct of our Lives, I have ever thought to be this, To have a few intimate Friends, and to make no Enemies, if it be poſſible, to our ſelves. St. *Paul* lays a great ſtreſs upon this, and preſſeth it very earneſtly. For after he had

Rom. 12. 17. forbidden Revenge, *Recompence to no man evil for evil.* As if he were very ſenſible how hard a matter it is to bring men to this, he adviſeth in the next

V. 18. words, to prevent, if it be poſſible, the occaſions of Revenge, *if it be poſſible, and as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*: That is, if we can avoid it, have no Enmity with any man. And that for two weighty Reaſons.

The *firſt* I have already intimated; becauſe it is ſo very hard to behave our ſelves towards Enemies as we ought. This we ſhall find to be a difficult Duty to Fleſh and Blood; and it will require great Wiſdom, and Conſideration, and Humility of Mind, for a Man to bring down his Spirit to the Obedience of his Command: For the fewer Enemies we have, the leſs occaſion will there be of conteſting this hard Point with our ſelves.

And the *other* Reaſon is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, becauſe Enemies will come of themſelves, and let a man do what he can, he ſhall have ſome. Friendſhip is a thing that needs to be cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing; but Enemies, like ill Weeds, will ſpring up of themſelves without our care and toil. *The Enemy*, as our *Saviour* calls the *Devil*, will ſow theſe *Tares in the night*, and when we leaſt diſcern it will ſcatter the Seeds of Diſcord and Enmity among men; and will take an advantage either from the Envy, or the Malice, or the Miſtakes of Men, to make them Enemies to one another. Which would make one wonder to ſee what care and pains ſome men will take, to provoke Mankind againſt them; how they will lay about them, and ſnatch at opportunities to make themſelves Enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy occaſion ſlip by them: But all this care and fear ſurely is needleſs; we may ſafely truſt an ill-natur'd World, that we ſhall have Enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But above all, it concerns every man in prudence to take great care not to make perſonal Enemies to himſelf; for theſe are the *soreſt* and the *ſureſt* of all other, and when there is an opportunity for it, will ſit hardeſt upon us. Injuries done to the Publick are certainly the greateſt, and yet they are many times more eaſily forgiven, than thoſe which are done to particular Perſons.

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For when Revenge is every bodies work, it may prove no bodies. The general Wrongs which are done to Humane Society, do not so sensibly touch and sting men, as personal Injuries and Provocations. The *Law* is never angry or in passion, and it is not only a great indecency, but a fault, when the *Judges* of it are so. Heat of Prosecution belongs to particular Persons; and it is *their* memory of Injuries, and desire to Revenge them, and diligence to set on and sharpen the Law, that is chiefly to be dreaded: And if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almost as few private as publick *Acts* of *Oblivion* pass'd in the World; and they commonly pass as slowly, and with as much difficulty, and not till the grace and good effect of them is almost quite lost.

II. *Secondly*, If we ought to be thus affected towards our Enemies, how great ought our kindness, and the expressions of it, to be to others? To those who never disobliged us, nor did us any Injury by word or deed; to those more especially, who stand in a nearer relation to us; to our natural Kindred, and to our spiritual Brethren to whom we are so strongly link'd and united by the common Bond of Christianity; and lastly, to our Benefactors, and those who have been beforehand with us in obligation: For all these are so many special Ties and Endearments of men to one another, founded either in *Nature* or *Religion*, or in common *Justice* and *Gratitude*. And therefore between all these and our Enemies we ought to make a very wide and sensible difference, in our Carriage and Kindness towards them. And if we do not do so, we represent our *Saviour* as an unreasonable Lawgiver, and do perversly interpret this *Precept* of his contrary to the reasonable and equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of Kindness is here required towards our Enemies, it is certain that so much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our tie and obligation to them they have deserved at our hands; nothing being more certain than that our *Blessed Saviour*, the Founder of our Religion, did never intend by any Precept of it to cancel any real Obligation of Nature, or Justice, or Gratitude; or to offer Violence in the least to the common Reason of Mankind. II.

III. *Thirdly*, Hence we learn the Excellency and the Reasonableness of the *Christian Religion*, which hath carried our Duty so high in things which do so directly tend to the Perfection of *Humane Nature*, and to the Peace of *Humane Society*; and, which if all things be rightly consider'd, are most agreeable to the clearest and best Reason of Mankind: So that those things which were heretofore look'd upon, and that only by some few of the wiser sort, as Heroical Instances of Goodness, and above the common rate of Humanity, are now by the *Christian Religion* made the indespensible Duties of all Mankind. And the Precepts of no other Religion, that ever yet appeared in the World, have advanced Humane Nature so much above it self, and are so well calculated for the Peace and Happiness of the World, as the Precepts of the *Christian Religion* are: for they strictly forbid the doing of Injuries, by way of prevention; and in case they happen, they endeavour to put a present stop to the progress of them, by so severely forbidding the revenging of them. III.

And yet after all this, it must be acknowledg'd to be a very untoward *Objection* against the Excellency and the Efficacy of the *Christian Religion*, that the Practice of so many *Christians* is so unequal to the Perfection of these Precepts. For who is there in the Changes and Revolutions of Humane Affairs, and when the Wheel of Providence turns them uppermost, and lays their Enemies at their Feet, that will give them any Quarter? Nay,

that does not greedily ſeize upon the firſt opportunities of Revenge, and like an *Eagle*, hungry for his Prey, make a ſudden ſtoop upon them with all his force and violence; and when he hath them in his *Pounces*, and at his Mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces?

So that after all our Boaſts of the Excellency of our Religion, where is the practice of it? This, I confeſs, is a terrible *Objection* indeed; and I muſt intreat of you, *my Brethren*, to help me to the beſt Anſwer to it: Not by any nice *Diſtinctions* and *Speculations* about it, but by the careful and honeſt Practice of this Precept of our Religion.

This was the old *Objection* againſt *Philoſophy*, that many that were Philoſophers in their Opinions were faulty in their Lives: But yet this was never thought by wiſe men to be a good Objection againſt Philoſophy. And unleſs we will lay more weight upon the *Objections* againſt Religion, and preſs them harder than we think it reaſonable to do in any other Caſe, we muſt acknowledge likewiſe, that this *Objection* againſt Religion is of no force. Men do not caſt off the *Art* of *Phyſick*, becauſe many *Phyſicians* do not live up to their own Rules, and do not themſelves follow thoſe Preſcriptions which they think fit to give to others; and there is a plain reaſon for it, becauſe their ſwerving from their own Rules doth not neceſſarily ſignifie that their Rules are not good, but only that their Appetites are unruly, and too hard and headſtrong for their Reaſon: Nothing being more certain than this, That Rules may be very reaſonable, and yet they that give them may not follow them.

IV. IV. The *fourth* and *laſt Inference* from this whole Diſcourſe ſhall be this, That being convinced by what hath been ſaid upon this Argument, of the Reaſonableneſs of this Duty, we would reſolve upon the Practice of it, when ever there is occaſion offer'd for it in the courſe of our Lives. I need not to put you in mind, that there is *now* like to be great occaſion for it: I ſhall only ſay, that whenever there is ſo, nothing can be tied more ſtrictly upon us than this Duty is.

It hath often been a great Comfort and Confirmation to me, to ſee the *Humanity* of the *Proteſtant Religion*, ſo plainly diſcovering it ſelf, upon ſo many occaſions, in the practice of the Profeſſors of it. And ſetting aſide all other advantages which *our* Religion hath been evidently ſhewn to have above *Popery* in point of Reaſon and Argument, I cannot for my life but think *that* to be the beſt Religion which makes the beſt Men, and from the nature of its Principles is apt to make them ſo; moſt kind and merciful, and charitable; and moſt free from Malice, and Revenge, and Cruelty.

And therefore our *Bleſſed Saviour*, who *knew what was in man* better than any man that ever was, knowing our great reluctancy and backwardneſs to the practice of this Duty, hath urged it upon us by ſuch forcible and almoſt violent Arguments, that if we have any tenderneſs for our ſelves, we cannot refuſe Obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, That no Sacrifice that we can offer will appeaſe God towards us, ſo long as we our ſelves are implacable to Men; *Verſe* 23*d.* of this *Chapter, If thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way: firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* To recommend this Duty effectually to us, *He* gives it a preference to all the *poſitive* Duties of Religion: *Firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Till this Duty be diſcharged, God will accept of no *Service*, no *Sacrifice* at our hands. And therefore our *Liturgy* doth with great reaſon declare it to be a neceſſary Qualification for our Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament, that we be *in Love and*

*Charity*

*Charity with our Neighbours*; because this is a *Moral* Duty, and of eternal Obligation, without which no *positive* part of Religion, such as the *Sacraments* are, can be acceptable to God; especially since in this *Blessed Sacrament* of *Christ's* Body and Blood we expect to have the Forgiveness of our Sins ratified and confirmed to us: Which how can we hope for from God, if we our selves be not ready to forgive one another?

*He shall have judgment without mercy*, says St. *James*, *who hath shewed no mercy*. And in that excellent *Form of Prayer* which our *Lord* himself hath given us, *He* hath taught us so to ask Forgiveness of God, as not to expect it from Him, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practise this Duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we put up this *Petition* to God, [*Forgive us our Trespasses, as we forgive them that Trespass against us*;] we send up a terrible *Imprecation* against our selves, and do in effect beg of God not to forgive us. And therefore, to imprint this matter the deeper upon our Minds, our *Blessed Saviour* immediately after the recital of this Prayer, hath thought fit to add a very remarkable enforcement of this *Petition*, above all the rest; *For if*, says He, *ye forgive men their trespasses*, Matth. 6. 14, 15 *your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

And our *Saviour* hath likewise in his *Gospel* represented to us, both the reasonableness of this Duty, and the Danger of doing contrary to it, in a very lively and affecting Parable, delivered by him to this purpose: Concerning *a wicked Servant*, who, when *his Lord* had but just before forgiven him Mat. 18. 23 a vast Debt of *ten thousand Talents*, took his poor *Fellow-servant by the throat*, and, notwithstanding his humble Submission and earnest Intreaties to be favourable to him, haled him to Prison for a trifling Debt of an *hundred Pence*. And the *Application* which he makes of this *Parable*, at the end of it, is very terrible, and such as ought never to go out of our Minds; *So likewise*, says He, *shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye do not from your hearts* V. 35 *forgive every one his brother his trespasses.* One might be apt to think at first view, that this *Parable* was over-done, and wanted something of a due *Decorum*; it being hardly credible, that a man after he had been so mercifully and generously dealt withal, as upon his humble Request to have so huge a Debt so freely forgiven, should whilst the memory of so much Mercy was fresh upon him, even the very next moment, handle his *Fellow-servant*, who had made the same humble Submission and Request to him which he had done to his *Lord*, with so much roughness and cruelty, for so inconsiderable a Sum. This, I say, would hardly seem credible; did we not see in experience how very unreasonable and unmerciful some men are, and with what confidence they can ask and expect great mercy from God, when they will shew none to Men.

The greatness of the Injuries which are done to us, is the reason commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makest this an Argument why thou canst not forgive thy Brother, lay thine hand upon thine heart, and bethink thy self how many more and much greater Offences thou hast been guilty of against God: Look up to that Just and Powerful Being that is above, and consider well, Whether thou dost not both expect and stand in need of more Mercy and Favour from *Him*, than thou canst find in thy heart to shew to thine offending Brother?

We have all certainly great reason to expect that as we use one another, God will likewise deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this Duty practis'd among Christians? And how hardly are the best of us brought to love our Enemies, and to forgive them? And this, notwithstanding that

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all our hopes of Mercy and Forgiveneſs from God do depend upon it. How ſtrangely inconſiſtent is our practice and our hope? And what a wide diſtance is there between our expectations from God, and our dealings with Men? How very partial and unequal are we, to hope ſo eaſily to be forgiven, and yet be ſo hard to forgive?

Would we have God, for *Chriſt's* ſake, to forgive us thoſe numberleſs and monſtrous provocations which we have been guilty of againſt His Divine Majeſty? And ſhall we not for *His* ſake, for whoſe ſake we our ſelves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We think it hard to be obliged to forgive great Injuries, and often repeated; and yet *Woe* be to us all, and moſt miſerable ſhall we be to all Eternity, if God do not all this to us, which we think to be ſo very hard and unreaſonable for us to do to one another.

I have ſometimes wonder'd how it ſhould come to paſs, that ſo many perſons ſhould be ſo apt to deſpair of the Mercy and Forgiveneſs of God to them; eſpecially conſidering what clear and expreſs Declarations God hath made of his readineſs to forgive our greateſt Sins and Provocations upon our ſincere Repentance: But the wonder will be very much abated, when we ſhall conſider with how much difficulty men are brought to remit great Injuries, and how hardly we are perſwaded to refrain from flying upon thoſe who have given us any conſiderable provocation. So that when Men look into themſelves, and ſhall carefully obſerve the motions of their own minds towards thoſe againſt whom they have been juſtly exaſperated, they will ſee but too much reaſon to think that Forgiveneſs is no ſuch eaſie matter.

But our comfort in this caſe is, That *God* is not as *Man*; that *his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*; but *as the Heavens are high above the Earth, ſo are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.*

And the beſt way to keep our ſelves from deſpairing of God's Mercy and Forgiveneſs to us, is to be eaſie to grant Forgiveneſs to others: And without this, as God hath reaſon to deny Forgiveneſs to us, ſo we our ſelves have all the reaſon in the World utterly to deſpair of it.

It would almoſt tranſport a *Chriſtian* to read that admirable Paſſage of the great *Heathen* Emperour and Philoſopher *M. Aurelius Antoninus*; *Can the Gods*, ſays he, *that are Immortal, for the continuance of ſo many Ages, bear without impatience with ſuch and ſo many Sinners as have ever been; and not only ſo, but likewiſe take care of them, and provide for them that they want nothing: And doſt thou ſo grievouſly take on, as one that can bear with them no longer? Thou, that art but for a moment of time; yea, Thou that art one of thoſe Sinners thy ſelf.*

M. Aur. Antoni. *l.* 7.

I will conclude this whole *Diſcourſe* with thoſe weighty and pungent *Sayings* of the wiſe *Son* of *Syrach*, *He that revengeth ſhall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain his Sins. Forgive thy neighbour that hath hurt thee, ſo ſhall thy Sins alſo be forgiven when thou prayeſt. One man beareth hatred againſt another, and doth he ſeek pardon of the Lord? He ſheweth no mercy to a man like himſelf, and doth he ask forgiveneſs of his own Sins?*

Eccl. 23. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Enable us, *O Lord*, by thy Grace, to practiſe this excellent and difficult *Duty* of our Religion: And then, *Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*: For thy mercies ſake, in *Jeſus Chriſt*; to whom with Thee, *O Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all *Honour* and *Glory*, *Adoration* and *Obedience*, both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

# SERMON XXXIV.

*The care of our Souls the One thing needful.*

Preached before the

## King and Queen

AT

## HAMPTON-COURT,

April 14th 1689.

### LUKE X. 42.

*But One thing is needful.*



IN the accounts of Wise men, one of the first Rules and Measures of humane actions is this, *To regard every thing more or less, according to the degree of its consequence and importance to our happiness.* That which is most necessary to that End ought in all reason to be minded by us in the first place, and other things only so far as they are consistent with that great End, and subservient to it.

Our *B. Saviour* here tells us that *there is one thing needful*, that is, one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us: And what *that* is, it is of great concernment to us all to know, that we may mind and pursue it as it deserves.

And we may easily understand what it is by considering the Context, and the occasion of these Words, which was briefly this: Our *Saviour*, as He went about preaching the Kingdom of God, came into a certain Village, where He was entertain'd at the House of two devout Sisters. The *elder*, who had the care and management of the Family and the Affairs of it, was imployed in making entertainment for such a *Guest:* The *other* sate at our *Saviour's* feet, attending to the Doctrine of Salvation which he preach'd.

The *elder* finding her self not able to do all the business alone, desires of our *Saviour* that he would command her Sister *to come and help her.* Upon this our *Saviour* gives her this gentle reprehension, *Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.* And what *that* is he declares in the next words, *And* Mary *hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her*; that is, she hath chosen to take care of her Salvation, which is infinitely more considerable than any thing else.

Our

Our *Saviour* doth not altogether blame *Martha* for her respectful care of Him, but commends her *Sister* for her greatear care of her Soul; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, He highly approves her wise choice, in preferring an attentive regard to his *Doctrine*, even before that which might be thought a necessary civility to His *Person*.

From the *Words* thus explain'd, the *Observation* which I shall make is this.

That the care of Religion and of our Souls is *the one thing necessary*, and that which every man is concern'd in the first place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This *Observation* seems to be plainly contain'd in the *Text*. I shall handle it as briefly as I can; and then by way of Application shall endeavour to perswade you and my self to mind this *one thing necessary*.

And in speaking to this serious and weighty Argument I shall do these *two* things.

*First*, I shall endeavour to shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls does consist.

*Secondly*, To convince men of the necessity of taking this care.

I. I. I shall shew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls doth consist. And this I shall endeavour to do with all the plainness I can, and so as every one that hears me may understand and be sufficiently directed what is necessary for him to do in order to his eternal Salvation.

And of this I shall give an account in the *five* following *Particulars*, in which I think the main business of Religion and the due care of our Souls does consist.

*First*, In the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and perswasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

*Secondly*, In the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errours and miscarriages of them.

*Thirdly*, In the constant and daily exercise of Piety and Devotion.

*Fourthly*, In avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls.

*Fifthly*, In the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Vertues of a good Life.

I. The due care of Religion and our Souls does consist in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and perswasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believ'd by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

For this knowledge of the necessary Principles and Duties of Religion is the foundation of all good Practice, wherein the life of Religion doth consist. And without this no man can be truly Religious. *Without faith*, saith Heb. 11. 6. the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, it is *impossible to please God: For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.* Now these two expressions of *pleasing God* and *seeking Him*, are plainly of the same importance, and do both of them signifie *Religion*, or the *Worship* and Service of God; which doth antecedently suppose our firm belief and perswasion of these *two* fundamental *Principles* of all Religion, That *there is a God*, and, That *He will reward those that serve him*: Because unless a man do first believe these, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any such thing as Religion.

And

And this knowledge of the necessary *Principles* of Religion our *B. Saviour* calls *Eternal Life*, because it is so fundamentally necessary in order to our attaining of it: *This is life eternal*, says *He*, *to know thee, the only true God*; John 17. 3.
*and Him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ*, that is, to be rightly instructed in the knowledge of *the only true* God, and *of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*: Under which *two* general *Heads* are comprehended all the necessary Principles both of the *Natural* and of the *Christian* Religion.

And to the attaining of this knowledge which is absolutely necessary to Salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is requir'd; but only a teachable disposition, and a due application of mind. For whatever in Religion is necessary to be known by all, must in all reason be plain and easie, and lye level to all capacities; otherwise we must say, that God *who would have all men to be saved*, hath not provided for the Salvation of all men. And therefore, now that the knowledge of the true God and the light of Christianity are shed abroad in the World, all that enjoy the Gospel are, or may be, sufficiently instructed in all things necessary to their happiness: unless such care be used, as is in the Church of *Rome*, to *take away the key of knowledge*, and to lock up the Scriptures from the People in an unknown Tongue; and this, as they pretend, upon a very charitable consideration, only it is to be hop'd that it is not true, that the generality of Mankind are mad, and have need to be kept in the dark. But supposing men to be allowed those means of knowledge which God affords, and hath appointed for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lie in mens Understandings, but in their Wills: Only when men know these things, they must attend to them and consider them; that the light which is in their Understandings may warm their Hearts, and have its due influence upon their Lives.

II. The due care of our Souls consists in the frequent Examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere Repentance for all the errours and miscarriages of them: In a more *particular* and deep humiliation and repentance for deliberate and wilful sins, so far as we can call them to our remembrance; and in a *general* repentance for sins of *Ignorance*, and *Infirmity*, and *Surprize*. In the exercise whereof we are always to remember, that the nature of true Repentance doth not consist only in an humble confession of our sins to God, and a hearty trouble and contrition for them; but chiefly in the stedfast purpose and resolution of a better life, and in prosecution of this resolution, in actual reformation and amendment.

By the constant exercise hereof, we are put into a safe condition; provided that we persevere in this holy resolution and course: But if we still retain the love and practice of any known sin, or if after we have taken up these good resolutions we return again to an evil course; this is a clear evidence, either that our Repentance was not sincere at first, or that we are relaps'd into our former state: And then our Souls are still in apparent danger of being lost, and will continue in that dangerous state, till we have renew'd our Repentance and made it good in the following course of our lives.

III. The due care of our Souls consists in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion, both in private, and in publick if there be opportunity for it, especially at proper times and upon more solemn occasions: By fervent prayer to God, and by hearing and reading the Word of God with reverence and godly fear: By frequenting his Publick Worship, and demeaning our selves in it with that solemnity and seriousness which becomes the presence and service of the great and glorious Majesty of God, who

observes our behaviour and sees into our hearts : And by receiving the B. Sacrament, as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind.

For these are not only outward testimonies of our inward piety, but they are means likewise appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holiness and goodness. And whoever neglects these Duties of Religion, or performs them in a slight and superficial manner, doth plainly shew that he hath neither a due sense of God, nor care of himself : For in vain does any man pretend that he does in good earnest design the End, when he neglects the best and most proper means for the attainment of it.

IV. The due care of our Souls consists also in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls. Such in general is the practice of any known Sin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the Swords point, and do endanger our Salvation as much as a deep wound in our Body would do our Life : And though such a wound may perhaps be cur'd afterwards by Repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful Sin knows the dismal consequence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry him at last : For upon such a provocation God may leave the Sinner to himself, and withdraw his grace from him, and give him up to a hard and impenitent heart to proceed from evil to worse, and from one wickedness to another, till he be finally ruin'd. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate act of Sin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the World is very pernicious to the Souls of men ; because it quencheth the heavenly life, and fills our minds with earthly cares and designs ; it tempts men to forsake God and Religion when their worldly interests come in competition with them ; and betrays them to fraud, and falshood, and all kind of injustice, and *many other hurtful lusts which drown the Soul in perdition.*

But besides these dangers which are more visible and apparent, there is another which is less discernible because it hath the face of Piety ; and that is *Faction* in Religion : By which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal about things wherein Religion either doth not at all, or but very little consist. For besides that this temper is utterly inconsistent with several of the most eminent *Christian* Graces and Vertues, as *humility*, *love*, *peace*, *meekness*, and *forbearance* towards those that differ from us ; it hath likewise *two* very great mischiefs commonly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious to Religion and the Souls of men.

*First*, That it takes such men off from minding the more necessary and essential parts of Religion. They are so zealous about small things, *the tithing of mint and anise and cummin*, that they *neglect the weightier things of the Law*, *Faith* and *Mercy*, *and Judgment*, and *the Love* of God : They spend so much of their time and heat about things doubtful, that they have no leisure to mind the things that are necessary : And are so concern'd about little *Speculative Opinions* in Religion, which they always call *fundamental Articles* of Faith, that the Practice of Religion is almost wholly neglected by them : And they are so taken up in spying out and censuring Error and Heresie in others, that they never think of curing those Lusts and Vices and Passions which do so visibly reign in themselves. Deluded People ! that do not consider that the greatest Heresie in the World is a wicked life, because it is so directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole design of the Christian Faith and Religion : And that do not consider, that God will sooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his Understanding than one fault of his Will.

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, Another great mischief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs against others to be great Piety in themselves, and as much as is necessary to bring them to Heaven; and to think that they are very Religious, because they keep a great stir about maintaining the Out-works of Religion, when it is ready to be starv'd within; and that there needs no more to denominate them good Christians, but to be of such a Party, and to be listed of such a Church, which they always take for granted to be the only true one; and then zealously to hate and uncharitably to censure all the rest of Mankind.

How many are there in the World, that think they have made very sure of Heaven, not by the old plain way of leaving their sins and reforming their lives, but by a more close and cunning way of carrying their Vices along with them into another Church, and calling themselves *good Catholicks*, and all others *Hereticks*? And that having done this, they are in a safe condition; as if a meer Name would admit a man into Heaven, or as if there were any Church in the World that had this phantastical Priviledge belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved for no other reason but because he is of it.

Therefore, as thou valuest thy Soul, take heed of engaging in any Faction in Religion; because it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be so employed about lesser things, that the main and substantial parts of Religion will be neglected: Besides, that a man deeply engag'd in heats and controversies of this nature, shall very hardly escape being possess'd with that Spirit of uncharitableness and contention, of peevishness and fierceness, which reigns in all Factions, but more especially in those of Religion.

V. The due care of our Souls consists in the even and constant practice of the several Graces and Vertues of a good life; or, as the *Apostle* expresseth it, in *exercising our selves always to have a conscience void of offence towards God and Men.* For herein is Religion best seen, in the equal and uniform practice of every part of our Duty: Not only in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning our selves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably towards all men: Not only in restraing our selves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our Lusts, and governing our Passions, and bridling our Tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life, must not only guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them; but must likewise be careful to preserve himself from those which are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal: He must not only endeavour to secure his Head and Heart from being wounded, but must have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any disease or wound so slight but that some have died of it: In like manner, the care of our Souls consists in an universal regard to our Duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: Though we ought to have a more especial regard to those Duties which are more considerable, and wherein Religion doth mainly consist; as *Piety* towards God, *Temperance* and *Chastity* in regard of our selves, *Charity* towards the Poor, *Truth* and *Justice*, *Goodness* and *Kindness* towards all men: But then no other *Grace* and *Vertue*, though of an inferiour rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what Instances the due care of Religion and our Souls doth chiefly consist.

And I would not have any man think that all this is an easie business and requires but little time to do it in, and that a small degree of diligence and in-

dustry will serve for this purpose : To master and root out the inveterate Habits of Sin, to bring our Passions under the command and government of our Reason, and to attain to a good degree of every Christian Grace and Vertue: That *Faith* and *Hope* and *Charity* ; *Humility* and *Meekness* and *Patience* may all *have their perfect work* ; and that, as St. *James* says, we *may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing* ; nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and of a good Christian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we shall find to be a great and a long work.

Some indeed would make Religion to be a very short and easie business, and to consist only in believing what Christ hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it : Which is so far from being the true Notion of Christian *Faith*, that, if I be not much mistaken, it is the very Definition of *Presumption*. For the *Bible* plainly teacheth us, that unless our Faith *work by Charity*, and *purifie our hearts*, and reform our lives ; unless like *Abraham*'s Faith it be *perfected by works*, it is but a *dead Faith*, and will in no wise avail to our Justification and Salvation. And our *B. Saviour*, the great *Author and finisher of our Faith*, hath no where, that I know of, said one word to this purpose, That Faith separated from Obedience and a good Life will save any man : But He hath said very much to the contrary, and that very plainly. For he promiseth Blessedness to none, but those who live in the practice of those Christian Graces and Vertues which are particularly mention'd by Him in the
Matth. 5. 3, 4. &c. beginning of his excellent *Sermon* upon the Mount ; of *Humility*, and *Repentance*, and *Meekness*, and *Righteousness*, and *Mercifulness*, and *Purity*, and *Peaceableness*, and *Patience* under Persecution and Sufferings for Righteous-
Matth. 7. 21. ness sake. And afterwards in the same *Sermon*, *Not every one*, saith He, *that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that*
V. 24. *doth the Will of my Father which is in heaven*. And again, *Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man*
V. 26, 27. *which built his house upon a Rock*. And afterwards, he tells us, that whosoever builds his hopes of Eternal Happiness upon any other foundation, than the Faith of the Gospel and the Practice of its Precepts, doth *build his house upon the Sand* ; which when it comes to be tried by the *Rain* and the *Winds* will
Joh. 13. 17. *fall* ; *and the fall of it will be great*. And elsewhere ; *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*. And he does very severely check the vain confidence and presumption of those, who will needs rely upon Him for Salvation without keeping his Commandments ; *Why call ye me*, says He, *Lord,*
Luke 6. 46. *Lord, and do not the things which I say* ?

Does any man think that he can be saved without loving God and Christ ?
1 Joh. 5. 3. *And this*, saith St. *John*, *is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments* : and again, *He that saith I know him*, and by the same reason, *he that saith I*
1 Joh. 2. 4. *love him, and keepeth not his Commandments, he is a lyar, and the truth is not*
Joh. 14. 15. *in him*. *If ye love me*, saith our *B. Lord*, *keep my Commandments* : And again, *He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*.
V. 21.

Does any man think, that any but the Children of God shall be heirs of
1 Joh. 3. 7. Eternal Life ? Hear then what St. *John* saith, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous* : And a-
V. 10. gain, *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil, he that doth not righteousness is not of God*.

In a word, this is the perpetual tenour of the *Bible*, from the beginning
Gen. 3. 7. of it to the end, *If thou dost well*, saith God to *Cain*, *shalt thou not be accepted*? And
Isa. 3. 10, 11. again, *Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings : Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him*. And in the *Gospel*, when the *young man* came to our

*Saviour*

*Saviour* to be instructed by Him *what good thing he should do that he might* inherit eternal life, our *Lord* gives him this short and plain advice, *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* And in the very last *Chapter* of the *Bible* we find this solemn declaration, *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the Gates into the City,* that is, into Heaven, which the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* calls the *City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* So vain and groundless is the imagination of those, who trust to be saved by an idle and ineffectual Faith, without holiness and obedience of Life. Matth. 19.17.

II. I proceed now in the *Second* place to convince us all, if it may be, of the necessity of minding Religion and our Souls. When we call any thing necessary, we mean that it is so in order to some End, which cannot be attained without it. We call those things the necessaries of Life, without which men cannot subsist and live in a tolerable condition in this World: And that is necessary to our eternal happiness, without which it cannot be attain'd. Now happiness being our chief End, whatever is necessary to *that* is more necessary than any thing else; and in comparison of *that,* all other things not only may, but ought to be neglected by us. II.

Now to convince men of the necessity of Religion, I shall briefly shew, That it is a certain way to happiness: That it is certain that there is no other way but this: And that if we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable.

*First,* That Religion is a certain way to happiness. And for this we have God's express Declaration and Promise, the best assurance that can be. He *that cannot lye* hath promised *eternal life, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour immortality.* All the happiness that we can desire, and of which the nature of man is capable is promised to us upon the terms of Religion, upon our *denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, and righteously, and godlily in this present world:* A mighty reward for a little service; an eternity of happiness, of joys unspeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and industry of a few days: A happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our Souls.

*Secondly,* 'Tis certain also that there is no other way to happiness but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promised it to us upon these and no other terms. He hath said, That *if we live after the flesh, we shall die; but if by the spirit we mortifie the deeds of the flesh, we shall live:* That *without holiness no man shall see the Lord:* And, that he that lives in the habitual Practice of any Vice, of *Covetousness,* or *Adultery,* or *Malice,* or *Revenge, shall not enter into the Kingdom of God:* And we have reason to believe Him concerning the terms of this happiness, and the means of attaining it, by whose favour and bounty alone we hope to be made partakers of it.

And if God had not said it in his Word, yet the nature and reason of the thing doth plainly declare it. For Religion is not only a condition of our happiness, but a necessary qualification and disposition for it. We must be like to God in the temper of of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men must be purg'd from their Lusts, and from those ill-natur'd and devillish Passions of *Malice,* and *Envy,* and *Revenge,* before they can be fit company for their heavenly Father, and meet to dwell with him *who is love, and dwels in love.*

*Thirdly,* If we neglect Religion, we shall certainly be extreamly and for ever miserable. The *Word of Truth* hath said it, that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.* Nay, if

God

God ſhould hold his hand, and ſhould inflict no poſitive torments upon ſinners, yet they could not ſpare themſelves, but would be their own Executioners and Tormentors. The guilt of that wicked Life which they had led in this World, and the Stings of their own Conſciences muſt neceſſarily make them miſerable, whenever their own Thoughts are let looſe upon them; as they will certainly be in the other World, when they ſhall have nothing either of pleaſure or buſineſs to divert them.

So that if we be concern'd, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid thoſe Miſeries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be neceſſary for us to mind Religion; without which we can neither attain that Happineſs, nor eſcape thoſe Miſeries.

All that now remains, is to perſwade you and my ſelf ſeriouſly to mind this *one thing* neceſſary. And to this end, I ſhall apply my Diſcourſe to two ſorts of Perſons; thoſe who are remiſs in a matter of ſo great concernment, and thoſe who are groſly careleſs, and mind it not at all.

*Firſt*, To thoſe who are remiſs in a matter of ſuch vaſt concernment: Who mind the buſineſs of Religion in ſome degree, but not ſo heartily and vigorouſly as a matter of ſuch infinite conſequence doth require and deſerve.

And here I fear the very beſt are greatly defective; and ſo much the more to be blamed, by how much they are more convinc'd than others, of the neceſſity of a Religious and Holy Life, and that without this no man ſhall ever be admitted into the Manſions of the Bleſſed: They believe likewiſe, that according to the degrees of every mans holineſs and vertue in this Life, will be the degrees of his happineſs in the other; that *he that ſows ſparingly ſhall reap ſparingly, and he that ſows plentifully ſhall reap plentifully*; and that the meaſure of every man's reward ſhall be according to his improvement of the Talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of theſe convictions? And notwithſtanding we are allur'd by the moſt glorious promiſes and hopes, and aw'd by the greateſt fears, and urg'd by the moſt forcible argument in the World, the evident neceſſity of the thing; Yet how faintly do we run the Race that is ſet before us? How frequently and how eaſily are we ſtop'd or diverted in our Chriſtian Courſe by very little Temptations? How cold, and how careleſs, and how inconſtant are we in the Exerciſes of Piety, and how defective in every part of our Duty? Did we act reaſonably, and as Men uſe to do in matters of much leſs moment, we could not be ſo indifferent about a thing ſo neceſſary, ſo ſlight and careleſs in a matter of Life and Death, and upon which all Eternity does depend.

Let us then ſhake off this ſloth and ſecurity, and reſolve to make that the great buſineſs of Time, which is our great concernment to all Eternity: And when we are immers'd in the cares and buſineſs of this Life, and *troubled about many things*, let this thought often come into our minds, That there is *one thing needful*, and which therefore deſerves above all other things to be regarded by us.

*Secondly*, There are another ſort of Perſons, who are groſly careleſs of this *one thing neceſſary*, and do not ſeem to mind it at all: Who go on ſecurely in an evil Courſe, as if either they had no Souls, or no concernment for them. I may ſay to theſe as the Maſter of the Ship did to *Jonah*, when he was faſt aſleep in the Storm, *What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Ariſe and call upon thy God.* When our Souls are every moment in danger of ſinking, it is high time for us to awake out of ſleep, to ply every Oar, and to uſe all poſſible care and induſtry to ſave a thing ſo precious from a danger ſo threatning and ſo terrible.

We

We are apt enough to be ſenſible of the force of this Argument of neceſſity in other caſes, and very carefully to provide againſt the preſſing neceſſities of this life, and how to avoid thoſe great temporal evils of poverty and diſgrace, of pain and ſuffering: But the great neceſſity of all, and that which is mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for Eternity, to ſecure the everlaſting happineſs, and to prevent the endleſs and inſupportable miſeries of a nother World. *This*, *this*, is the *one thing neceſſary*; and to this we ought to bend and apply all our care and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the neceſſity of things, and wiſely weigh the concernments of this Life and the other in a juſt and equal balance, we ſhould be aſhamed to miſplace our diligence and induſtry as we do; to beſtow our beſt thoughts and time about theſe vain and periſhing things, and to take no care about that *better part which cannot be taken from us*. Fond and vain men that we are! who are ſo ſolicitous how we ſhall paſs a few days in this world, but matter not what ſhall become of us for ever.

But as careleſs as we are now about theſe things, time will come when we ſhall ſadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick: When we come to lie upon a Death-bed, if God ſhall be pleas'd to grant us then ſo much time and uſe of our Reaſon as to be able to recollect our ſelves, we ſhall then be convinc'd how great a neceſſity there was of minding our Souls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being ſenſible of the value of them, till we are ready to deſpair of ſaving them.

But, bleſſed be God, this is not yet our caſe, though we know not how ſoon it may be. Let us then be wiſe, and conſider theſe things in time, leſt Death and Deſpair ſhould overtake and oppreſs us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to conſider that this is the beſt opportunity of your Lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now moſt capable of the beſt impreſſions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts *be harden'd through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*: This *is the acceptable time*, *this is the day of Salvation*.

And there is likewiſe a very weighty conſideration to be urg'd upon thoſe that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themſelves ſo; that this is the laſt opportunity of their lives, and therefore they ſhould lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might: For it will ſoon be paſt, and when it is, nothing can call it back.

It is but a very little while before we ſhall all certainly be of this mind, that the beſt thing we could have done in this World, was to prepare for the other. Could I repreſent to you that inviſible World which I am ſpeaking of, you would all readily aſſent to this counſel, and would be glad to follow it and put it ſpeedily in practice. Do but then open your eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are aware: Let us but judge of things now, as we ſhall all ſhortly judge of them: And let us live now, as after a few days we ſhall every one of us wiſh with all our Souls that we had liv'd; and be as ſerious, as if we were ready to ſtep into the other World, and to enter upon that change which Death will quickly make in every one of us. Strange ſtupidity of Men! That a change ſo near, ſo great, ſo certain, ſhould affect us ſo coldly, and be ſo little conſider'd and provided for by us: That the things of Time ſhould move us ſo much, and the things of Eternity ſo little. What will we do when this change comes, if we have made no preparation for it?

If we be Chriſtians, and do verily believe the things which I am ſpeaking of, and that after a few days more are paſs'd Death will come, and draw

aside that thick Veil of Sense and Security which now hides these things from us; and shew us that fearful and amazing sight which we are now so loth to think upon: I say, if we believe this, it is time for us to be wise and serious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his health hath retir'd himself from the noise and tumult of this world, and made that careful preparation for Death and a better Life, as may give him that constancy and firmness of Spirit, as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great Change without amazement; and to have a mind almost equally poiz'd between that strong inclination of Nature which makes us desirous to live, and that wiser dictate of Reason and Religion which should make us willing and contented to die whenever God thinks fit.

Many of us do not now so clearly discern these things, because our eyes are dazzel'd with the false light and splendour of earthly felicity: But *this* assuredly is more worth than all *the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them*, to be able to possess our Souls at such a time, and to be at perfect Peace with our own minds, having *our hearts fixed trusting in God*: To have our Accounts made up, and Estate of our immortal Souls as well settled and secur'd, as by the assistance of God's Grace humane care and endeavour, though mix'd with much humane frailty, is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of these things, we are utterly inexcusable if we do not make this our first and great care, and prefer it to all other interests whatsoever. And to this end, we should resolutely disentangle our selves from worldly cares and incumbrances; at least so far, that we may have competent liberty and leisure to attend this great concernment, and to put our Souls into a fit posture and preparation for another World: That when Sickness and Death shall come, we may not act our last part indecently and confusedly, and have a great deal of work to do when we shall want both time and all other advantages to do it in: Whereby our Souls, when they will stand most in need of comfort and support, will unavoidably be left in a trembling and disconsolate condition, and in an anxious doubtfulness of mind what will become of them for ever.

To conclude, This care of Religion and our Souls is a thing so necessary, that in comparison of it we are to neglect the very necessaries of Life. So our *Lord* teacheth us, *Take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be cloathed? But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.* (Matth. 6. 31, 33.) The Calls of God and Religion are so very pressing and importunate, that they admit of no delay or excuse whatsoever: This our *Saviour* signifies to us by denying the *Disciple*, whom he had call'd to follow *him*, leave to go and bury his Father, *Let the dead*, says he, *bury their dead, but do thou follow me.*

There is *one thing needful*, and that is the business of Religion and the care of our immortal Souls, which whatever else we neglect should be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. *O that there were such a heart in us. O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end*: Which God grant we may all do, *in this our day*; for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, now and ever. *Amen.*

# SERMON XXXV.

## *Of the Eternity of Hell Torments.*

## Preached before the Queen at *WHITEHALL*, *March* 7. 16$^{89}_{90}$.

MATTH. XXV. 46.

*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal.*



AMong all the Arguments to Repentance and a good Life, those have the greatest force and power upon the minds of Men, which are fetch'd from another World; and from the final state of good and bad men after this Life. And this our *Saviour* represents to us in a most lively manner, in that prospect which, in the latter part of this *Chapter*, he gives us of the *Judgment* of the *great Day*, namely, that at the end of the World the *Son of Man shall come in his glory, with his Holy Angels, and shall sit upon the Throne of his Glory; and all Nations shall be gathered before him*, and shall be separated into two great Companies, the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*; who shall stand the one on the Right hand, and the other on the Left of this great Judge; who shall pronounce Sentence severally upon them according to the actions which they have done in this Life: The Righteous shall be rewarded with eternal happiness, and the Wicked shall be sentenc'd to everlasting punishment. *And these*, that is, *the Wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The *Words* are plain and need no explication. For I take it for granted, that every one, at first hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the difference between the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, and between endless Happiness and Misery: But although these *Words* be so very easie to be understood, they can never be too much consider'd by us. The Scope and design of them is, to represent to us the different Fates of good and bad men in another World, and that their Ends *there*, will be as different, as their Ways and Doings have been *here* in this World: The serious consideration whereof is the greatest discouragement to Sin, and the most powerful argument in the World to a holy and vertuous Life: Because it is an argument taken from our greatest and most lasting interest, our happiness or our misery to all Eternity: A concernment of that vast consequence, that it must be the greatest stupidity and folly in the World for any man to neglect it.

This eternal state of Rewards and Punishments in another World, our *Blessed Saviour* hath clearly revealed to us. And as to one part of it, *viz.* That good men shall be eternally happy in another World, every one gladly admits it: But many are loth that the other part should be true, concerning the eternal punishment of wicked men. And therefore they pretend that it is contrary to the Justice of God to punish temporary Crimes with eter-

nal Torments: Because Justice always observes a proportion between Offences and Punishments; but between temporary Sins and eternal Punishments there is no proportion. And as this seems hard to be reconcil'd with Justice, so much more with that excess of Goodness which we suppose to be in God.

And therefore they say, that though God seem to have declar'd that impenitent Sinners shall be everlastingly punish'd, yet these declarations of Scripture are so to be mollified and understood, as that we may be able to reconcile them with the essential perfections of the Divine Nature.

This is the full force and strength of the Objection. And my work at this time shall be to clear, if I can, this difficult Point. And that for these two Reasons. *First*, For the vindication of the Divine Justice and Goodness: *That God may be justified in his sayings, and* appear *Righteous when he judgeth.* And *Secondly*, because the belief of the threatnings of God in their utmost extent is of so great moment to a good Life, and so great a discouragement to Sin: For the sting of Sin is the terrour of eternal punishment; and if men were once set free from the fear and belief of this, the most powerful restraint from Sin would be taken away.

So that in Answer to this Objection, I shall endeavour to prove these two things.

*First*, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture.

*Secondly*, That this is not inconsistent either with the Justice or the Goodness of God.

*First*, That the eternal punishment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture, namely, in these following *Texts*, Matth. 18.8. *It is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.* And *Matth.* 25. 41. *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And here in the *Text, these,* that is, *the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment.* And *Mark* 9. it is there three several times with great vehemency repeated by our Saviour, *where their worm dyeth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And 2 *Thess.* 1. 9. speaking of *them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of his Son,* it is said of them, *who shall be punish'd with everlasting destruction.*

I know very well that great endeavour hath been us'd to avoid the force of these *Texts*, by shewing that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, are frequently us'd in Scripture in a more limited sense, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus, *for ever*, doth very often in the *Old Testament* only signifie for a long time and till the end of the *Jewish* Dispensation. And in the *Epistle* of St. *Jude*, *verse* 7th. The Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* are said to be *set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, that is, of a fire that was not extinguish'd till those Cities were utterly consum'd.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the forementioned *Texts*. *First*, I shall readily grant, that the words, *for ever* and *everlasting*, do not always in Scripture signifie an endless duration; and that this is sufficiently proved by the instances alledg'd to this purpose. But then, *Secondly*, it cannot be denied on the other hand, that these words are often in Scripture used in a larger sense and so as necessarily to signifie an interminable and endless duration. As where Eternity is attributed to God, and he is said to *live for ever and ever*: And where eternal happiness in another World is promised to good men, and that *they shall be for ever with the Lord.* Now the very same words and expressions are used concerning the punishment of wicked men in another life, and there is great reason why we should understand them in the same extent: Both, because if God had intended to have told us that the punishment

niſhment of wicked men ſhall have no end, the Languages wherein the Scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than thoſe that are uſed in this caſe, whereby to expreſs to us a duration without end: And likewiſe, which is almoſt a peremptory deciſion of the thing, becauſe the duration of the puniſhment of wicked men is in the very ſame ſentence expreſs'd by the very ſame word which is us'd for the duration of the happineſs of the righteous: As is evident from the *Text*, *Theſe*, ſpeaking of the wicked, *ſhall go away*, εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, *into eternal puniſhment*, *but the righteous*, εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, *into life eternal.* I proceed to the

*Second* thing I propos'd; namely, to ſhew that this is not inconſiſtent either with the Juſtice or the Goodneſs of God. For in this the force of the Objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be anſwered ſeveral ways, none of which ſeems to me to give clear and full ſatisfaction to it.

*Firſt*, It is ſaid by ſome, that becauſe ſin is infinite in reſpect of the Object againſt whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deſerves an infinite puniſhment.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of ſubtlety than of ſolidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the Perſon againſt whom any offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reaſon all offences againſt God are certainly the greateſt of all other. But that Crimes ſhould hereby be heighten'd to an infinite degree can by no means be admitted; and that for this plain reaſon; becauſe then the evil and demerit of all ſins muſt neceſſarily be equal; for the demerit of no ſin can be more than infinite: And if the demerit of all ſins be equal, there can then be no reaſon for the degrees of puniſhment in another World: But to deny that there are degrees of puniſhment there, is not only contrary to reaſon, but to our *Saviour*'s expreſs aſſertion, that ſome ſhall be *beaten with many ſtripes* and ſome with fewer, and that it ſhall be *more tolerable for ſome in the day of judgment* than for others. Beſides, that by the ſame reaſon that the leaſt ſin that is committed againſt God may be ſaid to be infinite becauſe of its object, the leaſt puniſhment that is inflicted by God may be ſaid to be infinite becauſe of its Author; and then all puniſhments from God as well as all ſins againſt him would be equal; which is palpably abſurd. So that this anſwer is by no means ſufficient to break the force of this Objection.

*Secondly*, It is ſaid by others, that if wicked men lived for ever in this World they would ſin for ever, and therefore they deſerve to be puniſh'd for ever. But this hath neither truth nor reaſon enough in it to give ſatisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if a man lived never ſo long he would never repent and grow better?

Beſides, that the Juſtice of God doth only puniſh the ſins which men have committed in this life, and not thoſe which they might poſſibly have committed if they had lived longer.

*Thirdly*, It is ſaid in the laſt place, that God hath ſet before men everlaſting Happineſs and Miſery, and the ſinner hath his choice. Here are two things ſaid which ſeem to bid fairly towards an anſwer.

*Firſt*, That the reward which God promiſeth to our obedience is equal to the puniſhment which he threatens to our diſobedience, But yet this I doubt will not reach the buſineſs: Becauſe though it be not contrary to Juſtice to exceed in Rewards, that being matter of meer favour; yet it may be ſo, to exceed in puniſhments.

*Secondly*, It is further ſaid, that the ſinner in this caſe hath nothing to complain of, ſince he hath his own choice. This I confeſs is enough to ſilence the ſinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his deſtruction is of

himself; but yet after all that, it does not seem so clearly to satisfie the objection from the disproportion between the fault and the punishment.

And therefore I shall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by these following Considerations.

*First*, Let it be consider'd, that the measure of Penalties with respect to Crimes is not only, nor always, to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much less from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reasons of Government; which requires such penalties as may, if it be possible, secure the observation of the Law, and deterr men from the breach of it. And the reason of this is evident, because if it were once declar'd that no man should suffer longer for any Crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the consequence of this would be that sinners would be better husbands of their time and sin so much the faster, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might satisfie for their sins by a shorter punishment.

And it would be unreasonable likewise upon another account; because some of the greatest sins may perhaps be committed in the shortest time; for instance, *Murther*; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it are perpetual. For he that kills a man once kills him for ever. The act of Murther may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endless and irreparable. So that this objection of temporary Crimes being punish'd with so much longer sufferings is plainly of no force.

Besides, that whoever considers how ineffectual the threatning even of eternal torments is to the greatest part of sinners, will soon be satisfy'd that a less penalty than that of eternal sufferings would to the far greatest part of mankind have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreasonable, because it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from sin.

So that what proportion Crimes and Penalties ought to bear to each other, is not so properly a consideration of Justice, as of Wisdom and Prudence in the Lawgiver.

And the reason of this seems very plain, because the measure of Penalties is not taken from any strict proportion betwixt Crimes and Punishments; but from one great end and design of Government, which is to secure the observation of wholesome and necessary Laws; and consequently whatever Penalties are proper and necessary to this end are not unjust.

And this Consideration I desire may be more especially observed, because it strikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of Penalties to Crimes be not so properly a consideration of Justice, but rather of Prudence in the Lawgiver; then whatever the disproportion may be between temporary Sins and eternal Sufferings, Justice cannot be said to be concern'd in it.

Justice indeed is concern'd, that the Righteous and the Wicked should not be treated alike; and farther yet, that greater Sins should have a heavier punishment, and that *mighty sinners should be mightily tormented*; but all this may be consider'd and adjusted in the degree and the intenseness of the suffering, without making any difference in the duration of it.

The case then in short stands thus. Whenever we break the Laws of God we fall into his hands and lye at his mercy, and he may without injustice inflict what punishment upon us he pleaseth: And consequently, to secure his Law from violation, he may beforehand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and necessary to deter men from the Transgression of it. And this is not

esteemed

esteemed unjust among men, to punish Crimes that are committed in an instant with the perpetual loss of Estate, or Liberty, or Life.

*Secondly*, This will yet appear more reasonable when we consider, that after all he that threatens hath still the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between Promises and Threatnings, that he who promiseth passeth over a right to another, and thereby stands obliged to him in Justice and Faithfulness to make good his promise; and if he do not, the party to whom the promise is made is not only disappointed but injuriously dealt withal: But in threatnings it is quite otherwise. He that threatens keeps the right of punishing in his own hand and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reasons and ends of Government do require: And he may without any injury to the party threatned remit and abate as much as he pleaseth of the punishment that he hath threatned: And because in so doing he is not worse but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any wrong or injustice thereby done to him.

Nor is this any impeachment of God's truth and faithfulness, any more than it is esteem'd among men a piece of falshood not to do what they have threatned. God did absolutely threaten the destruction of the City of *Niniveh*, and his peevish *Prophet* did understand the threatning to be absolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a message that was not made good. But God understood his own right, and did what he pleas'd notwithstanding the threatning he had denounc'd, and for all *Jonah* was so touch'd in honour that he had rather have died himself than that *Niniveh* should not have been destroy'd, only to have verify'd his message.

I know it is said in this case, that God hath confirm'd these threatnings by an Oath, which is a certain sign of the immutability of his counsel; and therefore his Truth is concern'd in the strict and rigorous execution of them. The Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, and the *Israelites* who rebell'd in the Wilderness were also a Type of impenitent Sinners under the Gospel; and consequently the Oath of God concerning the rebellious *Israelites*, when he *sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest*, that is, into the Land of *Canaan*, doth equally oblige Him to execute his threatning upon all impenitent Sinners under the Gospel, that *they shall never enter into the Kingdom of God*. And this is very truly reason'd, so far as the threatning extends; which if we attend to the plain words of it, beyond which threatnings are never to be stretch'd, doth not seem to reach any further than to the exclusion of impenitent Sinners out of Heaven and their falling finally short of the Rest and Happiness of the Righteous: Which however, directly overthrows the Opinion ascrib'd to *Origen* that the Devils and wicked men shall all be saved at last; God having *sworn in his wrath that they shall never enter into his rest*.

But then, as to the eternal misery and punishment threatned to wicked men in the other World, though it be not necessarily comprehended in this Oath that they *shall not enter into his Rest*: yet we are to consider, that both the tenour of the *Sentence* which our blessed *Saviour* hath assur'd us will be pass'd upon them at the Judgment of the Great Day, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*; and likewise this Declaration in the Text, that *the Wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment*, though they do not restrain God from doing what he pleases, yet they cut off from the Sinner all reasonable hopes of the relaxation or mitigation of them. For since the great Judge of the World hath made so plain and express a Declaration, and will certainly pass such a Sentence, it would be the greatest folly and madness in the world

for

for the Sinner to entertain any hope of escaping it, and to venter his Soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly said upon this Argument, that seems material. And that is this, That the words *death* and *destruction* and *perishing*, whereby the punishment of wicked Men in the other World is most frequently express'd in *Scripture*, do most properly import *annihilation* and an utter end of Being; and therefore may reasonably be so understood in the matter of which we are now speaking.

To this I answer, that these words and those which answer them in other Languages, are often, both in *Scripture* and other *Authors*, used to signifie a state of great misery and suffering, without the utter extinction of the miserable. Thus God is often in *Scripture* said to bring *destruction* upon a Nation when he sends great Judgments upon them, though they do not exterminate and make an utter end of them.

And nothing is more common in most Languages, than by *perishing* to express a person's being undone and made very miserable. As in that known passage in *Tiberius* his Letter to the *Roman* Senate, * *Let all the Gods and Goddesses*, saith he, destroy *me worse than at this very time I feel my self to* perish, &c. in which Saying, the words, *destroy* and *perish*, are both of them us'd to express the miserable anguish and torment which at that time he felt in his mind, as *Tacitus* tells us at large.

* *Ita me Dii Deæq; omnes pejus perdant quam hodie perire me sentio*, &c.

And as for the word *Death*; a state of misery which is as bad or worse than death may properly enough be call'd by that name: And for this reason the punishment of wicked men after the Day of Judgment is in the Book of the *Revelation* so frequently and fitly call'd *the second death*. And *the Lake of fire*, into which the wicked *shall be cast* to be tormented in it, is expresly call'd *the second death*.

Rev. 20 14.

But besides this, they that argue from the force of these words, that the punishment of wicked men in the other World shall be nothing else but an utter end of their Being, do necessarily fall into two great inconveniencies.

*First*, That hereby they exclude all positive punishment and torment of Sinners. For if *the second death*, and to be *destroy'd*, and to *perish*, signifie nothing else but the *Annihilation* of Sinners and an utter extinction of their Being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful *Sentence* which shall be pass'd upon them at the *Day of Judgment*, then the *Fire of Hell* is quench'd all at once, and is only a frightful *Metaphor* without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenour of *Scripture*, which doth so often describe the punishment of wicked men in Hell by positive torments: And particularly our Blessed *Saviour*, describing the lamentable state of the damned in Hell, expresly says that *there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*; which cannot be, if Annihilation be all the meaning and effect of the Sentence of the Great Day.

*Secondly*, Another inconvenience of this Opinion is, that if *Annihilation* be all the punishment of Sinners in the other World, then the punishment of all Sinners must of necessity be equal, because there are no degrees of *Annihilation* or *not-being*. But this also is most directly contrary to *Scripture*, as I have already shewn.

I know very well that some who are of this opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the most terrible and intolerable torment of Sinners, and after that they believe that there shall be an utter end of their Being.

But then they must not argue this from the force of the Words before mentioned, because the plain inference from thence is, that Annihilation is all the punishment that wicked men shall undergo in the next Life; And if that be

not

not true, as I have plainly shewn that it is not, I do not see from what other words or expressions in *Scripture* they can find the least ground for this Opinion, that the torment of wicked Men shall at last end in their *Annihilation.* And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in *Scripture*, I cannot see what great comfort Sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at last in *Annihilation* and the utter extinction of their Beings.

*Thirdly*, We may consider further, that the primary end of all Threatnings is not punishment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that men may sin and be punish'd, but that they may not sin, and so may escape the punishment threatn'd. And therefore the higher the threatning runs, so much the more mercy and goodness there is in it; because it is so much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatned.

*Fourthly*, Let it be consider'd likewise, that when it is so very plain that God hath threatned eternal misery to impenitent Sinners, all the prudence in the World obliges men to believe that he is in good earnest, and will execute these threatnings upon them, if they will obstinately stand it out with him, and will not be brought to Repentance. And therefore in all reason we ought so to demean our selves, and so to perswade others, as knowing the terror of the Lord, and that they who wilfully break his Laws are in danger of eternal Death. To which I will add in the

*Fifth* and last place, That if we suppose that God did intend that his threatnings should have their effect to deter men from the breach of his Laws, it cannot be imagin'd that in the same Revelation which declares these Threatnings, any intimation should be given of the abatement or non-execution of them. For by this God would have weaken'd his own Laws, and have taken off the edge and terror of his threatnings: Because a Threatning hath quite lost its force, if we once come to believe that it will not be executed: And consequently it would be a very impious design to go about to teach or perswade any thing to the contrary, and a betraying men into that misery which had it been firmly believ'd might have been avoided.

We are all bound to preach, and you and I are all bound to believe the terrors of the Lord. Not so, as sawcily to determine and pronounce what God must do in this case; for after all, He may do what he will, as I have clearly shewn: But what is fit for us to do, and what we have reason to expect, if notwithstanding a plain and express threatning of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, we still go on *to treasure up to our selves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*; and will desperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far God will execute his threatnings upon Sinners in another World.

And therefore there is no need why we should be very solicitously concern'd for the honour of God's Justice or Goodness in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the Threatnings of God; and then, how terrible soever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for God, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own Honour; and that he, *who is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works*, will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal Goodness and Righteousness; and that he will certainly so manage things at the Judgment of the Great Day, as *to be justified in his sayings, and to be righteous when we are judged*. For notwithstanding his Threatnings, he hath reserved Power enough in his own hands to do right to all his Perfections: So that we may rest assur'd that he will *judge the world in righteousness*; and if it be any-wise inconsistent either with Righteousness or Goodness, which he knows much better than we do, to make Sinners miserable

for

for ever, that He will not do it; nor is it credible, that he would threaten Sinners with a Punishment which he could not justly execute upon them.

Therefore Sinners ought always to be afraid of it, and reckon upon it: And always to remember, that there is great Goodness and Mercy in the severity of God's Threatnings; and that nothing will more justifie the infliction of eternal Torments, than the foolish Presumption of Sinners in venturing upon them, notwithstanding such plain and terrible Threatnings.

This I am sure, is a good Argument to all of us, to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*; and with all possible care to endeavour the prevention of that misery which is so terribly severe, that at present we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the Justice and Goodness of God.

This God heartily desires we would do; and hath solemnly sworn, that *he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.* So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miscarriage, and all the assurance that the God of Truth can give us of his unwillingness to bring this misery upon us. And both these, I am sure, are Arguments of great Goodness. For what can Goodness do more than to warn us of this misery, and earnestly to perswade us to prevent it; and to threaten us so very terribly, on purpose to deter us from so great a danger?

And if this will not prevail with us, but we will go still on to *despise the riches of God's goodness, and long suffering, and forbearance*; what in reason remains for us, *but a fearful looking for of Judgment and* [illegible] *sume us*? And what almost can Justice, or even Goodness [illegible] than to inflict that punishment upon us, which with [illegible] we would wilfully run upon; and which no warning, no [illegible], no importunity could prevail with us to avoid? And when, as the Apostle says, *knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death*; yet for all that, we would venture to commit them.

And therefore, whatever we suffer, we do but inherit our own choice, and have no reason to complain of God, who hath set before us Life and Death, eternal Happiness and Misery, and hath left us to be the Carvers of our own Fortune: And if, after all this, we will obstinately refuse this happiness, and wilfully run upon this Misery, *Wo unto us! for we have rewarded evil to our selves.*

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this Argument, what we have all reason to expect, if we will still go on in our Sins, and will not be brought to Repentance. You have heard, what a terrible Punishment the just God hath threatened to the Workers of Iniquity: and that in as plain words as can be used to express any thing. *These*, that is, *the wicked, shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal.*

Here are *Life* and *Death*, Happiness and Misery set before us. Not this frail and mortal Life, which is hardly worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier Life; nor a temporal Death, to get above the dread whereof should not methinks be difficult to us, were it not for the bitter and terrible consequences of it: But an eternal Life, and an eternal enjoyment of all things which can render Life pleasant and happy; and a perpetual Death, which will for ever torment us, but never make an end of us.

These God propounds to our choice: And if the consideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our sins, and to reform our lives, what will? Weightier Motives cannot be propos'd to the understanding of Man, than *everlasting Punishment*, and *Life eternal*; than the greatest and most durable happiness, and the most intolerable and lasting misery that human Nature is capable of.

Now,

Now, considering in what terms the Threatnings of the Gospel are express'd, we have all the reason in the World to believe that the Punishment of Sinners in another World will be everlasting. However, we cannot be certain of the contrary, time enough to prevent it; not till we come there, and find it by experience how it is: And if it prove so, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible Doom, or to get it revers'd.

Some comfort themselves with the uncomfortable and uncertain hope of being discharg'd out of Being, and reduc'd to their first Nothing; at least after the tedious and terrible suffering of the most grievous and exquisite Torments for innumerable Ages. And if this should happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a comfort is this? Where is the Reason and Understanding of Men, to make this their last Refuge and Hope; and to lean upon it as a matter of mighty consolation, that they shall be miserable beyond all imagination, and beyond all patience, for God knows how many Ages? *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* No right sense and judgment of things? No consideration and care of themselves, no concernment for their own lasting Interest and Happiness?

*Origen*, I know not for what good reason, is said to have been of opinion That the punishment of Devils and wicked men, after the Day of Judgment, will continue but for a thousand years; and that after *that* time, they shall all be finally saved. I can very hardly perswade my self, that so wise and learned a man as *Origen* was, should be positive in an Opinion for which there can be no certain ground in Reason, especially for the punctual and precise term of a thousand years; and for which there is no ground at all, that I know of, from Divine Revelation.

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thousand years, or be it for a longer and unknown term, or be it for ever, which is plainly threatned in the Gospel: I say, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiser to take care to avoid it, than to dispute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, especially if we put it at the worst, as in all prudence we ought to do, it is by all possible means to be provided against: So terrible, so intolerable is the thought, yea the very least suspicion of being miserable for ever.

And now give me leave to ask you, as St. *Paul* did King *Agrippa*, *Do you believe the Scriptures?* And I hope I may answer for you my self as he did for *Agrippa*, *I know you do believe them.* And in them these things are clearly revealed, and are part of that *Creed* of which we make a solemn profession every day.

And yet when we consider how most men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain Declaration of our *Saviour* and our *Judge*, That *the wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal?*

Or if they do in some sort believe it, is it credible that they do at all consider it seriously, and lay it to heart? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our belief with our Actions, we must either alter our *Bible* and our *Creed*, or we must change our Lives.

Let us then *consider, and shew our selves men.* And if we do so, can any man to please himself for a little while be contented to be punished for ever; and for the shadow of a short and imperfect happiness in this life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miserable in the next World?

Surely this consideration alone, of the extreme and endless misery of impenitent Sinners in another World, if it were but well wrought into our minds, would be sufficient to kill all the temptations of this World, and to lay them dead at our feet; and to make us deaf to all the Enchantments of

Sin and Vice: Because they bid us so infinitely to our loss, when they offer us the enjoyment of a short Pleasure, upon so very hard and unequal a condition as that of being miserable for ever.

The eternal Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which are the great Sanction and Security of God's Laws, one would think should be a sufficient weight to cast the Scales against any Pleasure, or any Pain, that this World can tempt, or threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we still go on to do wickedly; when *we know the terrours of the Lord*, and that we must one day answer all our bold violations of his Law, and contempts of his Authority, with the loss of our immortal Souls, and by *suffering the vengeance of eternal Fire*?

What is it then that can give men the *Heart* and *Courage*; but I recal that Word, because it is not true *Courage*, but *fool hardiness*, thus to outbrave the Judgment of God, and to set at nought the horrible and amazing consideration of a miserable Eternity? How is it possible that men that are awake, and in their wits, should have any ease in their minds, or enjoy so much as one quiet hour, whilst so great a danger hangs over their heads, and they have taken no tolerable care to prevent it? If we have any true and just sense of this danger, we cannot fail to shew that we have it, by making haste to escape it, and by taking that care of our Souls, which is due to immortal Spirits that are made to be Happy or Miserable to all Eternity.

Let us not therefore estimate and measure things as they appear now to our sensual and deluded and deprav'd Judgments; but let us open our eyes, and look to the last issue and consequence of them: Let us often think of these things, and consider well with our selves, what apprehensions will then probably fill and possess our minds, when we shall stand trembling before our *Judge*, in a fearful expectation of that terrible *Sentence* which is just ready to be pronounced, and as soon as ever it is pronounced to be executed upon us: When we shall have a full and clear sight of the unspeakable Happiness, and of the horrible and astonishing Miseries of another World: When there shall be no longer any Veil of Flesh and Sense to interpose between them and us, and to hide these things from our eyes: And, in a word, when Heaven with all the Glories of it, shall be open to our view; and, as the expression is in *Job, Hell shall be naked before us, and Destruction shall have no covering*.

How shall we then be confounded, to find the truth and reality of those things which we will not now be perswaded to believe? And how shall we then wish, that we had believed *the terrors of the Lord*; and instead of quarrelling with the Principles of Religion, and calling them into question, we had lived under the constant sense and awe of them?

Blessed be God, that there is yet *hope concerning us*, and that we may yet *flee from the wrath to come*; and that the Miseries of Eternity may yet be prevented in Time: And that for this very end and purpose, our most Gracious and Merciful God hath so clearly revealed these things to us, not with a desire to bring them upon us, but that we being warned by his Threatnings, might not bring them upon our selves.

*Wisdom of Solomon, ch. 1. ver. 12, 13, 16.* I will conclude all with the Counsel of the *Wise Man*; *Seek not Death in the error of your Life, and pull not upon your selves destruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the Living: But ungodly men with their works and words have called it down upon themselves.* Which that none of us may do, God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom, with Thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

# SERMON XXXVI.

*Succeſs not always anſwerable to the probability of Second Cauſes.*

BEING

## A FAST-SERMON

Preached before the

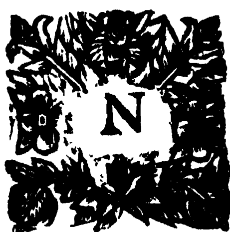
# Houſe of Commons,

ON

*Wedneſday*, April *the* 16th. 1690.

ECCLESIASTES IX. II.

*I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong, nor yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.*



Ext to the acknowledgment of God's Being, nothing is more eſſential to Religion, than the Belief of his Providence, and a conſtant dependance upon him, as the great Governour of the World, and the wiſe Diſpoſer of all the Affairs and Concernments of the Children of Men: And nothing can be a greater Argument of Providence, than that there is ſuch an order of Cauſes laid in Nature, that in ordinary courſe every thing does uſually attain its end; and yet that there is ſuch a mixture of Contingency, as that now and then, we cannot tell how nor why, the moſt likely cauſes do deceive us, and fail of producing their uſual effects.

For if there be a God and a Providence, it is reaſonable that things ſhould be thus: Becauſe a Providence does ſuppoſe all things to have been at firſt wiſely fram'd, and with a fitneſs to attain their end; but yet it does alſo ſuppoſe that God hath reſerv'd to himſelf a power and liberty to interpoſe and to croſs as he pleaſes, the uſual courſe of things; to awaken men to the conſideration of him, and a continual dependance upon him; and to teach us to aſcribe thoſe things to his wiſe diſpoſal, which, if we never ſaw any change,

we ſhould be apt to impute to blind neceſſity. And therefore the *Wiſe-man*, to bring us to an acknowledgment of the Divine Providence, tells us that thus he had obſerved things to be in this World; that though they generally happen according to the probability of Second Cauſes, yet ſometimes they fall out quite otherwiſe, *I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong*, &c.

The connexion of which Words, with the foregoing Diſcourſe, is briefly this. Among many other Obſervations which the *Wiſe Preacher* makes in this *Sermon* of the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this World, and of the miſtakes of men about them, he takes notice here in the *Text*, and in the *Verſe* before it, of two Extremes of Humane Life: Some, becauſe of the uncertainty of all worldly things, caſt off all care and diligence, and neglect the uſe of proper and probable means, having found by experience, that when men have done all they can, they many times fail of their end, and are diſappointed they know not how: Others, on the contrary, rely ſo much upon their own skill and induſtry, as to promiſe ſucceſs to themſelves in all their undertakings; and preſume ſo much upon ſecond Cauſes, as if no conſideration at all were to be had of the Firſt.

The *Wiſe Preacher* reproves both theſe extremes, and ſhews the folly and vanity of them. On the one hand, of thoſe who ſit ſtill, and will uſe no care and endeavour, becauſe it may all happen to be diſappointed, and to fail of Succeſs: Not conſidering, that though prudent care and diligence will not always do the buſineſs, yet there is nothing to be done without them, in the ordinary courſe of things; and that in the order of Second Cauſes, theſe are the moſt likely and effectual means to any end: And therefore, rejecting this lazy Principle, he counſels men, whatever they propoſe to themſelves, to be very diligent and vigorous in the uſe of proper means for the attainment of it; in the *Verſe* immediately before the *Text*, *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

But then he obſerves alſo, as great a folly and vanity on the other hand; that they who manage their affairs with great wiſdom and induſtry, are apt to preſume and reckon upon the certain ſucceſs of them, without taking into conſideration that which in all human affairs is moſt conſiderable, the favour and bleſſing of that Almighty and Wiſe Providence which rules the World; *I returned*, ſays he, *and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong*, &c.

*I returned and ſaw*, that is, having conſider'd on the one hand the folly of ſloth and careleſneſs, I turned mine eyes the other way, and ſaw as great an error on the other hand; in mens preſuming too much upon their own diligence and conduct, without taking notice of the Providence of God. For I have found, ſays *Solomon*, by manifold obſervation, That the ſucceſs of things does not always anſwer the probability of ſecond cauſes and means. So that the ſum of the *Preacher*'s advice is this: When thou propoundeſt any end to thy ſelf, be diligent and vigorous in the uſe of means; and when thou haſt done all, look above and beyond theſe to a Superiour Cauſe which over-rules, and ſteers, and ſtops as he pleaſes, all the motions and activity of ſecond Cauſes: And be not confident that all things are ever ſo wiſely and firmly laid, that they cannot fail of ſucceſs. For the Providence of God doth many times ſtep in to divert the moſt probable event of things, and to turn it quite another way: And whenever he pleaſeth to do ſo, the moſt ſtrong and likely means do fall lame, or ſtumble, or by ſome accident or other come ſhort of their end

*I returned*,

*I returned, and saw under the Sun*, that is, here below, in this inferiour World.

*That the race is not to the swift:* This the *Chaldee Paraphrast* does understand with relation to warlike affairs, *I beheld*, says he, *and saw, that they who are swift as eagles do not always escape in the day of battel.* But I chuse rather to understand the Words in their more obvious sense, that in a Race many things may happen to hinder him that is swiftest from winning it.

*Nor the battel to the strong*; That is, Victory and Success in War do not always attend the greatest force and preparations, nor doth that side which in human estimation is strongest always prevail and get the better.

*Nor yet bread to the wise; Neque doctorum panem esse*, so some render the Words, that learned men are not always secured against Poverty and Want.

*Nor yet riches to men of understanding*, for so some *Interpreters* translate the Words, *Neque industriis divitias esse*, that those who take most pains do not always get the greatest Estates.

*Nor yet favour to men of skill*; that is, to those who understand men and business, and how to apply themselves dextrously to the inclinations and interests of Princes and Great men. Others interpret these Words more generally, *Neque peritorum artificum esse gratiam*, that those who excel most in their several Arts and Professions do not always meet with suitable encouragement: But because the Word, which is here render'd *favour*, is so frequently us'd by *Solomon* for the favour of Princes, the former sense seems to be more easie and natural.

*But time and chance happeneth to them all*; that is, saith *Aben Ezra*, there is a secret Providence of God which sometimes presents men with unexpected opportunities, and interposeth accidents which no human wisdom could foresee: Which gives success to very unlikely means; and defeats the swift, and the strong, and the learned, and the industrious, and them that are best vers'd in men and business, of their several ends and designs.

It sometimes happens, that he that is *swiftest*, by a fall, or by fainting, or by some other unlucky accident may lose the Race.

It sometimes falls out, that a much smaller and weaker number, by the advantage of ground, or of a pass; by a stratagem, or by a sudden surprize, or by some other accident and opportunity, may be victorious over a much greater force.

And that an unlearned man, in comparison, by favour, or friends, or by some happy chance of setting out to the best advantage the little learning he has, before one that hath less, may arrive at great things; when perhaps at the same time, the man that is a hundred times more learned than he, may be ready to starve.

And that men of no great parts and industry may stumble into an estate and by some casual hit in Trade, may attain such a Fortune, as the man that hath toil'd and drudg'd all his life shall never be able to reach.

And *Lastly*, that a man of no great ambition or design may fall into an opportunity, and by happening upon the *mollia tempora fandi*, some soft and lucky season of address, may slide into his Prince's favour, and all on the sudden be hoisted up to that degree of dignity and esteem, as the designing Man who hath been laying Trains to blow up his Rivals, and waiting opportunities all his days to worm others out, and to screw himself in, shall never be able to attain.

The words thus explain'd contain this general Proposition, which shall be the subject of my following Discourse.

*That in humane affairs the most likely means do not always attain their end, nor does the event constantly answer the probability of second causes; but there is a secret Providence which governs and over-rules all things, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the most hopeful and probable designs.*

In the handling of this Proposition I shall do these three things.

*First*, I shall confirm and illustrate the truth of it, by an Induction of the Particulars which are instanc'd in, here in the *Text*.

*Secondly*, I shall give some reason and account of this, why the Providence of God doth sometimes interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable designs.

*Thirdly*, I shall draw some Inferences from the whole, suitable to the occasion of this Day. In all which I shall endeavour to be as brief as conveniently I can.

*First*, For the confirmation and illustration of this Proposition, *That the most likely means do not always attain their end; but there is a secret Providence which over-rules and governs all events, and does, when it pleases, interpose to defeat the most probable and hopeful designs.* This is the general Conclusion which *Solomon* proves by this Induction of Particulars in the *Text*. And he instanceth in the most probable means for the compassing of the several ends which most men in this World propose to themselves. And the great darlings of mankind are *Victory*, *Riches*, and *Honour*: I do not mention *Pleasure*, because that seems rather to result from the use and enjoyment of the other. Now if a man design *Victory*, what more probable means to overcome in a Race than swiftness? What more likely to prevail in War than strength? If a man aim at Riches, what more proper to raise an Estate than understanding and industry? If a man aspire to Honour, what more likely to prefer him to the King's favour and service than dexterity and skill in business? And yet experience shews that these means, as probable as they seem to be, are not always successful for the accomplishment of their several ends.

Or else we may suppose that *Solomon* by these Instances did intend to represent the chief engines and instruments of humane designs and actions. Now there are *five* things more especially, which do eminently qualify a man for any undertaking; expedition and quickness of dispatch; strength and force; providence and forecast; diligence and industry; knowledge, and insight into men and business: And some think that *Solomon* did intend to represent these several qualities by the several instances in the *Text*. *The Race is not to the swift*, that is, men of the greatest expedition and dispatch do not always succeed: For we see that men do sometimes out-run business, and make haste to be undone. *Nor the battel to the strong*, that is, neither does force and strength always carry it. *Nor yet bread to the wise*; which some understand of the provident care and pains of the Husbandman, whose harvest is not always answerable to his labour and hopes. *Nor yet riches to men of understanding*, or industry; that is, neither is diligence in business always crown'd with success. *Nor yet favour to men of skill*, that is, neither have they that have the greatest dexterity in the management of affairs always the fortune to rise. And if we take the words in this sense, the thing will come much to one: But I rather approve the first interpretation, as being less forc'd and nearer to the *Letter*.

So that the force of *Solomon*'s reasoning is this, if the swiftest do not always win the race; nor the strongest always overcome in War: If knowledge and learning do not always secure men from want; nor industry always make men rich; nor political-skill always raise men to high place; nor any other means, that can be instanced in as most probable, do constantly and infallibly

sibly succeed: then it must be acknowleg'd that there is some other Cause which mingles it self with humane affairs and governs all events; and which can, and does when it pleases, defeat the most likely, and bring to pass the most improbable designs: And what else can that be imagin'd to be, but the secret and over-ruling Providence of Almighty God? when we can find no other, we are very unreasonable if we will not admit this to be the Cause of such extraordinary events, but will obstinately impute that to blind Necessity or Chance which hath such plain Characters upon it of a Divine Power and Wisdom.

I might be large upon every one of these Instances in the *Text*, and illustrate them by pat and lively Examples both out of Scripture and other Histories. But I shall briefly pass over all of them, but the *second*, *The battel is not to the strong.*

*The race is not to the swift.* If we understand this literally, it is obvious to every man to imagine a great many accidents in a Race, which may snatch Victory from the swiftest runner. If we understand it, as the *Chaldee Pharaphrase* does, with relation to War, that the swiftest does not always overcome or escape in the day of Battel; of this *Asahel* is an eminent Instance who though he was, as the Scripture tells us, *light of foot as a wild Roe*, yet did he not escape the Spear of *Abner*. It seems that among the *Ancients*, swiftness was look'd upon as a great qualification in a Warriour, both because it serves for a sudden assault and onset, and likewise for that which in civility we call a nimble retreat. And therefore *David*, in his Poetical *Lamentation* over those two great Captains, *Saul* and *Jonathan*, takes particular notice of this warlike quality of theirs; *They were*, says he, *swifter than Eagles, stronger than Lyons:* And the constant Character which *Homer* gives of *Achilles*, one of his principal *Heroes*, is, that *he was swift of foot*: The *Poet* feigns of him, that by some charm or gift of the Gods he was invulnerable in all parts of his Body except his heel: And *that* was the part to which he trusted; and in *that* he received his mortal wound: The wise Poet hereby instructing us, that many times our greatest danger lyes there, where we place our chief confidence and safety.

*Nor yet bread to the wise*, or to the learned. The poverty of *Poets* is Proverbial; and there are frequent instances in History of eminently learned persons that have been reduced to great straits and necessities.

*Nor yet riches to men of understanding:* By which, whether we understand men of great parts, or of great diligence and industry; it is obvious to every man's observation, that an ordinary capacity and understanding does usually lye more level to the business of a common Trade and Profession, than more refin'd and elevated parts; which lye rather for speculation than practice, and are better fitted for the pleasure and ornament of conversation, than for the toil and drudgery of business: As a fine Razor is admirable for cutting hairs, but the dull Hatchet much more proper for hewing a hard and knotty piece of timber. And even when Parts and Industry meet together, they are many times less successful in the raising of a great Estate, than men of much lower and slower understandings: because these are apt to admire riches, which is a great spur to industry; and because they are perpetually intent upon one thing, and mind but one business, from which their thoughts never straggle into vain and useless enquiries after knowledge, or news, or publick affairs; all which being foreign to their business they leave to those who are, as they are wont to say of them in scorn, more curious, and too wise to be rich.

*Nor yet favour to men of skill.* All History is full of Instances of the casual advancement of men to great favour and honour, when others who have made it their serious study and business, have fallen short of it. I could give a famous Example in this kind, of the manifold and manifest disappointment of a whole *Order* of men: the slyest and most subtle, *in their generation, of all the children of this World*; the most politically instituted, and the best studied and skill'd in the tempers and interests of men; the most pragmatical, and cunning to insinuate themselves into the Intrigues of Courts and great Families: and who, by long experience, and an universal intelligence, and communicated observations, have reduced humane affairs, at least as they think, to a certain Art and Method, and to the most steddy Rules that such contingent things are capable of: I believe you all guess before-hand whom I mean, even the *honest Jesuits*: And yet these men of so much Art and Skill have met with as many checks and disappointments, as any sort of men ever did: They have been discountenanc'd by almost all Princes and States, and, one time or other, banish'd out of most of the Courts and Countries of *Europe*. And it is no small argument of the Divine Providence, that so much cunning hath met with so little countenance and success; and hath been so often, so grosly infatuated, and their *counsels turn'd into foolishness*.

But I promis'd only to mention these, and to insist upon the second Instance in the *Text*, *I return'd, and saw under the sun, that the battel is not to the strong*, to the *Gibborim*, the *Gyants*, for so the *Hebrew* word signifies; in which *Solomon* might possibly have respect to the History of the *Israelites* subduing the *Canaanites*, a People of great strength and stature, among whom were the *Gyants*, *the sons of Anak*: or more probably, to the famous encounter of his Father *David* with the great *Goliah*: But however that be, the *Scripture* is full of Examples to this purpose; that when the Providence of God is pleas'd to interpose in favour of any side, it becomes victorious; according to the saying of King *Asa* in his Prayer to God, *it is nothing with thee to help whether with many, or with those that have no power.* (2 Chron 14. 11.)

Sometimes God hath defeated great Armies by plain and apparent Miracles: Such was the drowning of *Pharaoh* and his Host in the *Red Sea*; and the *Stars* fighting in their courses against *Sisera*; by which Poetical expression I suppose is meant *Sisera*'s being remarkably defeated by a visible hand from Heaven: And such was the destruction of the proud King of *Assyria*'s Army by an *Angel*, who slew an hundred and fourscore and five thousand of them in one night.

Sometimes God does this by more humane ways; by striking mighty Armies with a *Panick* and unaccountable fear; and sometimes by putting extraordinary spirits and courage into the weaker side, so that *an hundred shall chase a thousand, and a thousand shall put ten thousand to flight.*

This made *David* so frequently to acknowledge the Providence of God, especially in the affairs of War. (Ps. 33. 16.) *There is no King saved by the multitude of an Host, neither is a mighty man delivered by much strength.* And again, (Ps 44. 6.) *I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.* And *Solomon* confirms the same observation, (Prov. 21. 30, 31.) *There is no wisdom*, says he, *nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord. The horse is prepared against the day of battel, but safety*, or, as some *Translations* render it, *Victory, is of the Lord*, *Gideon*, by a very odd stratagem of *Lamps* and *Pitchers*, defeated a very numerous Army, only with three hundred men. *Jonathan* and his *Armour-bearer*, by climbing up a Rock, and coming suddenly on the back of the *Philistines* Camp, struck them with such a terrour as put their whole Army to flight. King *Asa*, with a much inferiour number, defeated that huge *Ethiopian* Army which consisted

of

of a *Million*. And how was *Xerxes* his mighty Army overthrown, almost by a handful of *Grecians*? And to come nearer our selves, how was that formidable Fleet of the *Spaniards*, which they presumptuously called *invincible*, shatter'd and broken in pieces, chiefly by the Winds and the Sea? So many accidents are there, especially in War, whereby the Divine Providence doth sometimes interpose and give Victory to the weaker side.

And this hath been so apparent in all Ages, that even the *Heathen* did always acknowledge, in the Affairs of War, a special interposition of *Fortune*, by which the wiser among them did understand the *Divine Providence*. *Plutarch*, speaking of the *Romans*, says, that *Time* and *Fortune*, the very same with *Solomon's Time* and *Chance* here in the *Text*, *did lay the foundation of their Greatness*, by which he ascribes the success to a remarkable Providence of God concurring with several happy Opportunities.

And *Livy*, their great Historian, hath this remarkable Observation, That *in all human affairs, especially in matters of War, Fortune hath a mighty stroke.* And again, *No where*, says he, *is the event less answerable to expectation than in War; and therefore nothing is so slight and inconsiderable, which may not turn the Scales in a great matter.* And *Cæsar* himself, who was perhaps the most skilful and prosperous Warriour that ever was, makes the same acknowledgment; *As in all other things*, says he, *so particularly in War, Fortune hath a huge sway.* And *Plutarch* observes, That there was no *Temple* at *Rome* dedicated to *Wisdom* or *Valour*, but a most magnificent and stately one to *Fortune*; signifying hereby, that they did ascribe their Success infinitely more to the Providence of God, than to their own Courage and Conduct. I proceed now in the

*Second* place, to give some reason and account of this, Why the Providence of God doth sometimes thus interpose to hinder and defeat the most probable designs of men. To bring men to an acknowledgment of his Providence, and of their dependance upon Him, and subordination to Him; and that He is the great Governour of the World, and *rules in the Kingdoms of men*; and that *all the inhabitants of the Earth are as nothing to Him*, and the power of Second Causes inconsiderable: That *He doth according to his will, in the Armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou.* II.

God hath so order'd things, in the administration of the affairs of the World, as to encourage the use of means; and yet so, as to keep men in a continual dependance upon him for the efficacy and success of them: To encourage Industry and Prudence, God generally permits things to their natural course, and to fall out according to the power and probability of second Causes.

But then, lest men should cast off Religion, and *deny the God that is above*, lest they should *trust in their sword and their bow, and say, the Lord hath not done this*; lest men should look upon themselves as the Creators and Framers of their own Fortune, and when they do but a little outstrip others in wisdom or power, in the skill and conduct of humane affairs, they should grow proud and presumptuous, God is pleased sometimes more remarkably to interpose, *to hide pride from man*, as the expression is in *Job*; to check the haughtiness and insolence of mens spirits, and to keep them within the bounds of modesty and humility; to make us to know *that we are but men*, and that the reins of the World are not in our hands, but that there is *One* above who sways and governs all things here below.

And indeed if we should suppose, in the first frame of things which we call

*Nature*, an immutable Order to be fix'd, and all things to go on in a constant course, according to the power and force of second Causes, without any interposition of Providence to stop, or alter that course, upon any occasion: In this case, the foundation of a great part of Religion, but especially of Prayer to God would be quite taken away: Upon this Supposition, it would be the vainest thing in the World to pray to God for the good Success of our undertakings, or to acknowledge Him as the Author of it: For if God do only look on, and permit all things to proceed in a settled and establish'd course; then instead of praying to God we ought to ply the means, and to make the best provision and preparation we can for the effecting of what we desire; and to rely upon that, without taking God at all into our counsel and consideration. For all application to God by Prayer doth evidently suppose, that the Providence of God does frequently interpose, to over-rule events besides and beyond the natural and ordinary course of things, and to steer them to a quite different Point, from that to which in humane probability they seem'd to tend.

So that it is every whit as necessary to Religion to believe the Providence of God, and that He governs the World, and does when He pleases interpose in the affairs of it, as that He made it at first. I come now in the

III. *Third* and last place, to make some Inferences suitable to the Occasion of this Day, from what hath been said upon this Argument: And they shall be these.

*First*, From hence we may learn, not to account Religion, and time spent in the Service of God, and in Prayer to Him for his Blessing upon our endeavours, to be any hindrance to our affairs. For after we have done all we can, the event is still in God's hand, and rests upon the disposal of his Providence.

And did men firmly believe this, they would not neglect the duty of Prayer, and behave themselves so carelesly, and unconcernedly, and irreverently in it, as we see too many do; they would not look upon every hour that is spent in Devotion as lost from their business.

If men would but take a view of what hath happen'd to them in the course of a long Life, I believe most of us would see reason to acknowledge, that our Prosperity and Success in any kind hath depended more upon happy opportunities, upon undesign'd and unexpected occurrences, than upon our own prudent forecast and conduct.

And if this were well consider'd by us, we should not methinks be so apt to leave God out of our counsels and undertakings, as if he were a mere Name and Cypher in the World. It is, I am sure, the advice of one that was much wiser and more experienc'd, than any of us will pretend to be, I Prov. 3. 5, 6. mean, *Solomon*, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths: Be not wise in thine one eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil.* There is no Principle that ought more firmly to be believed by us than this, That to live under a constant sense and awe of Almighty God, to depend upon his Providence, and to seek his favour and blessing upon all our designs, being fearful to offend Him, and careful to please him, is a much nearer and surer way to Success, than our own best Prudence and Preparations.

And therefore, at such a time, more especially, when we are going to War, or engaged in it, we should break off our sins by repentance and the sincere resolution of a better course: We should earnestly implore the blessing of God upon our undertakings; and not only take great care that our Cause be

just,

just, but likewise that there be *no wicked thing* amongst us, to drive God out of our Camp; *no accursed* thing, that may provoke Him to deliver us into the hands of our Enemies. It was a particular Law given by God to the *Jews*, *When the Host goeth forth against thine Enemy, then keep thy self from every wicked thing*; *then*, that is, more especially at such a time. Deut. 23. 9.

And this is a necessary Caution, not only to those who are personally engaged in the War, that by the favour of God they may have their heads covered in the Day of Battel, or if God shall suffer them to fall by the hand of the Enemy, that having made their peace beforehand with Him, they may not only have the comfort of a good Cause, but of a good Conscience, void of offence towards God and Men.

But this Caution likewise concerns those, who are interested in the success and event of the War; as we all are, not only in regard of our Lives and Estates, but of that which ought to be much dearer to us, our Religion and the freedom of our Consciences; which are now every whit as much at stake, as our Civil Interests and Liberties. And therefore as we tender any, or all of these, we should be very careful *to keep our selves from every wicked thing*; that they who fight for us, may not for our sins, and for our sakes, turn their backs in the day of battel, and fall by the Sword of the Enemy.

*Secondly*, From hence we may likewise learn, so to use the means as still to depend upon God; who can, as he pleases, bless the Counsels and Endeavours of Men, or blast them and make them of none effect. For as God hath promised nothing but to a wise and diligent use of means, so all our prudence, and industry, and most careful preparations may miscarry, if He do not favour our design: For without Him nothing is wise, nothing is strong, nothing is able to reach and attain its end.

We should indeed use the means as vigorously, as if God did nothing; and when we have done so, we should depend upon God for the success of those means, as if we our selves had done nothing, but did expect all from his favour and blessing: For when all is done, we are only safe under his Protection, and sure of success from his Blessing.

For whatever vain and *foolish* men may *say in their hearts*, *There is*, *There is a* God, that made the World, and administers the affairs of it with great Wisdom and Goodness; else how came any of us into Being, or what do we here? Did we not most assuredly believe that there is a God, that governs the World and super-intends humane affairs; the first wish of a Wise man would be, to steal out of Being, if he could; and that the same Chance or Necessity that brought him into the World, would take the first opportunity to carry him out. For to be every moment liable to present, and great, and certain Evils; and to have no security against the continuance of them, or the return of the same or worse Evils; nor to have any assurance of a better and more durable state of rest and happiness hereafter, is in truth so very melancholy a meditation, that I do not know any consideration in the World that is of force and power enough to support the mind of man under it: And were there not in the World a *Being*, that is wiser, and better, and more powerful than our selves, and that keeps things from running into endless confusion and disorder; a *Being* that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly consider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we suffer upon his account, I do not see what reason any man could have to take any comfort and joy in Being, or to wish the continuance of it for one moment.

*Thirdly* and lastly, The consideration of what hath been said upon this Argument, should keep us from being too sanguine and confident of the most

most likely designs and undertakings; because these do not always answer the probability of second Causes and Means; and never less, than when we do with the greatest confidence rely upon them; when we promise most to our selves from them, then are they most likely to deceive us: They are as the Prophet compares them, like *a broken reed*, which a man may walk with in his hand, whilst he lays no great stress upon it; but if he trust to it, and lean his whole weight on it, it will not only fail him, but even *pierce him through*.

And we cannot do a greater prejudice to our affairs, when they are in the most hopeful and likely condition to succeed and do well, than to shut God and his Providence out of our counsels and consideration. When we pass God by, and take no notice of Him, but will rely upon our own wisdom and strength, we provoke him to leave us *in the hands of our own counsel*, and to let us see what weak and foolish Creatures we are: And a man is never in greater danger of drowning, than when he clasps his arms closest about himself: Besides, that God loves to resist the self-confident and presumptuous, and *to scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts*.

And as in all our concernments we ought to have a great regard to God, the Supreme disposer of all things, and earnestly to seek his favour and blessing upon all our undertakings, so more especially in the affairs of War; in which the providence of God is pleas'd many times in a very peculiar manner to interpose and interest it self: And there is great reason to think he does so; because all War is, as it were, an Appeal to God, and a reference of those Causes to the decision of his Providence, which through the Pride, and Injustice, and perverse passions of men, can receive no other determination.

And here God loves to shew himself, and in an eminent manner to take part with Right and Justice against those *mighty Oppressors of the Earth*, who like an overflowing flood would bear down all before them: In this case, the Providence of God is sometimes pleas'd to give a remarkable check to great Power and Violence, and to *One* that vainly gives out himself *not unequal to the whole World*; by very weak and contemptible means; and, as *the Apostle* elegantly expresseth it, *by the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are*: And to say to *Him*, as God once did to the proud King of *Assyria*: *Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed, and against whom hast*
Isa. 37. 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32. *thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy one of* Israel. *Hast thou not heard long ago, that I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced Cities into ruinous heaps: Therefore their Inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded,* &c. *But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me: Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook into thy nose, and my bridle into thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest*——*The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall do this*.

But more especially, in vindication of his oppressed Truth and Religion and in the great and signal Deliverances of his Church and People, God is wont to take the conduct of affairs into his own hands, and not to proceed by humane rules and measures: He then bids second Causes to stand by, that *his own Arm may be seen*, and *his Salvation may appear*: He raiseth the spirits of men above their natural pitch, *and giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength*, as the *Prophet* expresseth it.

Thus hath the Providence of God very visibly appear'd in our late Deliverance

rance; in such a manner, as I know not whether He ever did for any other Nation, except the People of *Israel*, when He deliver'd them *from the House of Bondage by so mighty a hand and so out-stretched an arm*: And yet too many among us, I speak it this day to our shame, do not seem to have the least sense of this great Deliverance, or of the hand of God which was so visible in it; but like the Children of *Israel* when they were brought out of *Egypt*, we are full of *murmurings* and discontent against God the Author, and his Servant the happy Instrument under God of this our Deliverance. What the *Prophet* says of *that* People, may I fear be too justly apply'd to us, *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness; in the Land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the Majesty of the Lord: Lord, When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see, and be ashamed*: And I hope I may add that which follows in the next *verse*, *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works for us.* What God hath already done for our deliverance is, I hope, an earnest that He will carry it on to a perfect Peace and Settlement; and this, notwithstanding our high Provocations and horrible Ingratitude to *the God of our Life*, and *of our Salvation.* Isa. 26 10, 11.

And whenever the Providence of God thinks fit thus to interpose in humane affairs, *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*: For which reason *their Majesties*, in their great Piety and Wisdom, and from a just sense of the Providence of Almighty God, which *rules in the Kingdoms of men*, have thought fit to set apart this *Day* for solemn Repentance and Humiliation: That the many and heinous Sins, which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of, and which are of all other our greatest and most dangerous Enemies, may not *separate between God and us*, and *hinder good things from us*, and cover us with confusion in the day of our danger and distress: And likewise, earnestly to implore the favour and blessing of Almighty God upon *their Majesties* Forces and Preparations by Sea and Land: And more particularly, for the preservation of *his Majesties* Sacred Person, upon whom so much depends, and who is contented again to hazard Himself to save us.

To conclude; There is no such way to engage the Providence of God for us, as by a real Repentance and Reformation; and by doing all we can, in our several Places from the highest to the lowest, by the provision of wise and effectual Laws for the discountenancing and suppressing of Profaneness and Vice, and by the careful and due execution of them, and by the more kindly and powerful influence of a good Example, to retrieve the ancient Piety and Virtue of the Nation: For without this, whatever we may think of the firmness of our present Settlement, we cannot long be upon good terms with Almighty God, upon whose favour depends the prosperity and stability of the present and future Times.

I have but one thing more to mind you of; and that is, to stir up your Charity towards the Poor; which is likewise a great part of the Duty of this Day, and which ought always to accompany our Prayers and Fastings: *Thy Prayers and thine Alms*, saith the *Angel* to *Cornelius*, are *come up before God*: And therefore if we desire that our Prayers should reach Heaven, and receive a gracious answer from God, we must send up our Alms along with them.

And instead of all other Arguments to this purpose, I shall only recite to you the plain and perswasive words of God Himself, in which He declares what kind of Fast is acceptable to Him: *Is it such a Fast as I have chosen? a Day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast, and an acceptable* Isa. 58. 5, 6, &c.

*Day to the Lord ? Is not this the Fast that I have chosen ? To loose the bands of wickedness, and to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke : Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thine house ; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily ; thy righteousness,* or thine *Alms, shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward : Then shalt thou call, and I will answer thee ; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, here I am.*

Now to *Him that sitteth upon the Throne,* and to *the Lamb that was slain :* To *God, even our Father,* and *to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth: Unto Him, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father : To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever,* Amen.

*And the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, for ever and ever,* Amen.

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# FAST-SERMON

Preached before the

# Lord Mayor, &c.

ON

*Wednesday,* June *the* 18th. 1690.

To the Right Honourable

Sir *THOMAS PILKINGTON*,

Lord Mayor of the City of *London* :

AND THE

COURT of ALDERMEN.

MY LORD,

*IN Obedience to your Commands, I have publiſh'd this Sermon lately preach'd before you, and do now humbly preſent you with it ; heartily wiſhing it may have that good effect for the Reformation of our Lives, and Reconciliation of our unhappy Differences, which was ſincerely intended by,*

MY LORD,

Your moſt Faithful

and Humble Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

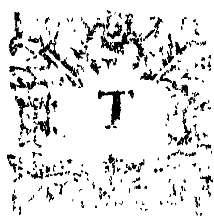
SERMON

# SERMON XXXVII.

## *The way to prevent the Ruin of a Sinful People.*

### JEREMIAH VI. 8.

*Be thou instructed O* Jerusalem, *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.*



These Words are a merciful warning from God to the People of *Israel* by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, the last Prophet that God sent to them before their Captivity in *Babylon*. The time of his Prophecy was of a long continuance, above the space of forty years, *viz.* from the thirteenth year of King *Josiah*, to the eleventh year of King *Zedekiah*, the year in which *Jerusalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*.

This serves to shew the great patience of God to a sinful Nation. And this is much the same space of time that God gave warning by our blessed Saviour and his *Apostles* to the same People of the *Jews* concerning their final Destruction. For it was about forty years after the Prediction of our Saviour concerning it just before his Death, that the terrible Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the *Jewish* Nation was executed upon them by the *Romans*, or rather chiefly by themselves; as I shall presently shew. Of which dreadful Desolation, the first taking of *Jerusalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and their Captivity into *Babylon* was a kind of Type and Forerunner. For, as *Josephus* observes, the taking of *Jerusalem* by *Titus Vespasian* did happen in the very same Month, and on the very same Day of the Month in which *Jerusalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar*, *viz.* upon our *tenth* of *August*.

And it is not unworthy of our Observation, that the time of God's warning is wont to hold some sort of proportion with the extent of his Judgments. Before the universal Deluge which destroyed the whole World, *Noah* and his Family only excepted, God gave a much longer warning by the preaching of *Noah*, for the space of an *hundred and twenty years*. Before the destruction of a particular Nation, if we may judge by God's dealing with the *Jews*, his time of warning is *forty years*. And before the destruction of a particular City, if we may conclude any thing from the single example of *Nineveh*, the time of God's warning is yet much shorter, the space of *forty days*.

And now to what end doth God exercise so much patience and threaten so long before hand, but that by the terrour of his threatnings men may be brought to repentance, and by repentance may prevent the execution of them? For all the while that God by his Prophet threatens ruin and destruction to the People of *Israel*, he earnestly invites and urges them to repentance, that by this means they might escape the ruin that was denounced against them: This being a condition perpetually implyed in the denunciation of publick Judgments, that if a People repent of the evil of their doings, God also will repent of the evil which he said he would do unto them, as he ex-

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presly declares, *chap.* 18. *verse* 7, 8. *At what instant I speak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that Nation against whom I have pronounc'd turn'd from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them.* And here in the Text, after God had threaten'd destruction to *Jerusalem*, because of the overflowing of all manner of wickedness and oppression in the midst of her, he gives her a merciful warning to prevent this ruin and desolation by repentance, *ver.* 6, 7. *Thus hath the Lord of Hosts said, Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem; this is a City to be visited, she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. As a fountain casteth out waters, so she* [illegible] *Before me continually is grief and wounds.* And yet [illegible] had pronounced this fearful Sentence upon her, he tells her that all this [illegible] on might yet be prevented, if they would but hearken to the [illegible] and be instructed by him concerning the things of [illegible] follows in the next words, *Be thou instructed O Jerusalem* [illegible] *from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.* [illegible] O Jerusalem, that is, do but now at last take that counsel a[illegible] which hath so often and so long, been tender'd to thee by my [illegible] the Prophet, who hath now for the space of forty years con[illegible] and that with great earnestness and importunity, been warning thee of this danger, and calling thee to repentance and a better mind

*Lest my soul depart from thee.* In the *Hebrew* it is, [illegible] *ed and disjointed from thee*, as it is in the margin of your [illegible] nifying in the most emphatical manner, the wonderful [illegible] ness which God had for his People, and how strongly his [illegible] to them, and how loth he was to withdraw his love from them [illegible] like the tearing off of a limb, or the plucking of a joint in [illegible] is God to come to extremity; so hardly is he brought to [illegible] ruin even of a sinful Nation: How much rather would he, that they [illegible] structed and receive correction, and hearken to the things of [illegible] But if they will not be perswaded, if no warning will work upon them, *his spirit will not always strive with them*; but *his soul* will at last, though with great unwillingness and reluctancy, *depart from them.*

And then, no intercession will prevail for them: as he threatens by the same Prophet, *chap.* 15. *verse* 1. *Then said the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this People; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth*; away with them into Captivity, for they have lost my heart, and no intercession of others for them, nothing but their own repentance can recover it.

And when his Soul is once departed from a People, and his heart turned against them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will be let loose upon
Jer. 15. 2. them; as we may read in the next *verse* of that *Chapter*: *And it shall come to pass if they say unto thee, whither shall we go forth? Then shalt thou tell them, Thus saith the Lord, such as are for death to death, and such as are for the sword to the sword, and such as are for the famine to the famine, and such as are for the captivity to the captivity.* For then God will be weary of repenting, as he tells them, *verse* 6. *Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and deliver thee, I am weary of repenting.* By our obstinate impenitency we harden the heart of God against us, and make him *weary of repenting.* And
Hos. 9. 12. when his soul is thus departed from a People, nothing remains but a fearful expectation of ruin. *Wo unto them*, saith God by the Prophet, *when I depart from them.* Therefore *be thou instructed*, O Jerusalem, *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.* Having

Having given this account of the Words, I shall observe from them three things well worth our consideration.

*First,* The infinite goodness and patience of God towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.* How loth is He that things should come to this extremity? He is not without great difficulty, and some kind of violence, as it were, offered to himself, brought to this severe resolution; his soul is, as it were, *rent* and *disjointed* from them.

*Secondly,* You see here what is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the misery and ruin of a sinful People. If they will be *instructed* and take warning by the threatnings of God, and will become wiser and better, then *his soul* will not *depart from them,* he will not bring upon them the *desolation* which he hath threatned.

*Thirdly,* You have here intimated the miserable case and condition of a People, when God takes off his affection from them, and gives over all further care and concernment for them. Wo unto them, when *his soul departs from them.* For when God once leaves them, then all sorts of evils and calamities will break in upon them.

I shall speak as briefly as I can to these *Three* observations from the *Text.*

*First,* I observe the infinite patience and goodness of God towards a sinful People, and his great unwillingness to bring ruin and destruction upon them; *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.* How loth is God that things should come to this? He is very patient to particular persons, notwithstanding their great and innumerable provocations. *God is strong and patient,* though men *provoke him every day.* And much greater is his patience to whole Nations and great Communities of men. I.

How great was it to the old World, *when the long suffering of God waited in the days of* Noah, for the space of an hundred and twenty years? And did not expire, till *he saw that the wickedness of man was grown great upon the earth, and that all flesh had corrupted its way;* not till it was necessary to drown the World to cleanse it, and to destroy Mankind to reform it, by beginning a *new* World upon the only righteous Family that was left of all the last generation of the *old.* For so God testifies concerning *Noah,* when he commanded him to enter into the Ark, saying, *Come thou and all thy house into the* Ark; *for thee,* that is, thee only, *have I seen righteous before me in this Generation.* Gen. 7. 1

The patience of God was great likewise to *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* and the Cities about them. For when *the cry of their sins had reached heaven,* and called loud for vengeance to be poured down upon them, to express the wonderful patience of God toward such grievous Sinners, though nothing is hid from his sight and knowledge, yet he is represented as coming down from Heaven to Earth on purpose to enquire into the truth of things, and *whether they were altogether according to the cry that was come up to him.* And when he found things as bad as was possible, yet then was he willing to have come almost to the lowest terms imaginable, that if there had been but *ten righteous persons* in those wicked Cities, *he would not have destroy'd them for the ten's sake.*

Nay, he seems to come to lower terms yet, with the City of *Jerusalem,* Jer. 5. 1. *Run ye to and fro through the streets of* Jerusalem, *and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, and seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.*

What can be imagin'd more slow, and mild, and merciful, than the proceedings of the Divine Justice against a sinful People? God is represented

in Scripture as taking a long time to *make ready his bow*, and to *whet his glittering ſword*, before *his hand takes hold of* vengeance; as if the inſtruments of his wrath lay by him blunt and ruſty and unready for uſe. Many a time he threatens, and many a time lifts up his hand, before he gives the fatal blow. And how glad is he when any good man will ſtep in and interpoſe to ſtay his hand? As we read *Pſal.* 106. 23. *Therefore he ſaid*, ſpeaking of the People of *Iſrael*, *that he would deſtroy them, had not* Moſes *his ſervant ſtood in the breach to turn away his wrath, leſt he ſhould deſtroy them.* And how kindly doth God take it of *Phinehas*, as a moſt acceptable piece of ſervice done to him, and which he hardly knew how ſufficiently to reward, that he was a means of putting a ſtop to his anger againſt the People of *Iſrael*: Inſomuch that the Pſalmiſt tells us, that *it was accounted to him for righteouſneſs to all generations for evermore.* I will recite the whole paſſage at large, becauſe it is remarkable. When the People of *Iſrael* were ſeduced into Idolatry and Whoredom by the Daughters of *Moab*, *Phinehas* in great zeal ſtood up and executed judgment upon *Zimri* and *Cozbi* in the very act. By which means the Plague which was broken out upon the Congregation of *Iſrael* was preſently ſtayed. Hear what God ſays to *Moſes* concerning this act of *Phinehas*. *The Lord ſpake unto* Moſes *ſaying*, Phinehas *the ſon of* Eleazar, *the ſon of* Aaron *the Prieſt, hath turned away my wrath from the Children of* Iſrael, *whilſt he was zealous for my ſake that I conſumed them not. Wherefore ſay, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of Peace, and he ſhall have it, and his ſeed after him, even the Covenant of an everlaſting Prieſt-hood, becauſe he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of* Iſrael: That which God takes ſo kindly at his hands, next to his zeal for Him, is, that he pacified God's wrath towards the Children of *Iſrael*.

And thus did God from time to time deal with the People of *Iſrael*, that great Example of the Old Teſtament of the merciful methods of the Divine Providence towards a ſinful Nation. And an Example, as St. *Paul* tells us, 1 Cor. 10. 11 purpoſely *recorded for our admonition upon whom the ends of the World are come.*

Let us therefore conſider a little the aſtoniſhing patience of God towards that perverſe People. After all the ſigns and wonders which he had wrought in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and for their ſupport in the Wilderneſs; and notwithſtanding their groſs and ſtupid infidelity and horrible ingratitude to God their Saviour, and all their rebellious murmurings and diſcontents, yet he ſuffer'd their manners for the ſpace of forty years.

And when they were at laſt peaceably ſettled in the promiſed Land; notwithſtanding their frequent relapſes into Idolatry, with what patience did God expect their repentance, and the reſult of all the merciful meſſages and warnings given them from time to time by his Prophets, as one that earneſtly deſir'd it, and even long'd for it? O Jeruſalem, *waſh thine heart* Jer. 4. 14. *from wickedneſs, that thou mayſt be ſaved; how long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* that is, how long wilt thou delude thy ſelf with vain hopes of eſcaping the judgments of God by any other way than by repentance? And again, Jer. 13. 27. O Jeruſalem, *wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it once be?* And *chap.* 8. *ver.* 6. ſays God there, *I hearkened and I heard, but they ſpake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done?* Where God is repreſented, after the manner of men, waiting with great patience, as one that would have been glad to have heard any penitent word drop from them, to have ſeen any ſign of their repentance and return to a better mind.

And when they made ſome ſhews of repentance, and had ſome fits of good reſolution that did preſently vaniſh and come to nothing, how paſſionately does God complain of their fickleneſs and inconſtancy? O Ephraim, *what ſhall I do unto thee:* O *Judah*, what ſhall I do unto thee? *for your goodneſs is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away?* And

And at last, when nothing would do, with what difficulty and reluctancy does God deliver them up into the hands of their Enemies? *How shall I give thee up* Ephraim? *How shall I deliver thee* Judah? *How shall I make thee as* Admah? *how shall I set thee as* Zeboim? *mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together; I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not destroy* Ephraim. What a conflict is here? what tenderness and yearning of his bowels towards them? He cannot find in his heart to give them up, till he is forced to it by the last necessity. Hos. 11. 8, 9

And when the Nation of the *Jews*, after their return from the Captivity of *Babylon*, had in the course of several Ages greatly corrupted themselves, and fill'd up the measure of their sins by *crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory*, yet how slow was the patience of God in bringing that fatal and final Destruction upon them? Not till after the most merciful warnings given to them, by the *Apostles* of our *Lord* and *Saviour*; not till after the most obstinate impenitency of forty years, under the most powerful means of Repentance that any People in the World ever injoyed. I proceed to the

*Second* Observation from the *Text*, *namely*, What is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the ruin of a sinful People? And that is, if they will be *instructed* and take warning by the Threatnings of God to become wiser and better, then *his soul will not depart from them*, and he will not bring upon them the *desolation* threatned. *Be thou instructed*, O Jerusalem, *lest my soul depart from thee, and I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited*; intimating, or rather plainly declaring to us, that if we will receive instruction and take warning the evil threaten'd shall not come. For what other reason can there be, why God should threaten so long before he strikes, and so earnestly press men to repentance, but that he might have the opportunity to spare them, and to shew mercy to them? II

And indeed, as I observ'd before, all the Denunciations and Threatnings of God to a sinful Nation do carry this tacit condition in them, that if that Nation turn from their evil ways, God will repent of the evil which he thought to do unto them. For God never passeth so irrevocable a Sentence upon a Nation, as to exclude the case of repentance: Nay on the contrary, He gives all imaginable encouragement to it, and is always ready to meet it, with a pardon in his hand. *How often would I have gathered thee*, says our merciful Lord when we wept over *Jerusalem*, *as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, and ye would not; therefore your House is left unto you desolate.*

God is very merciful to particular persons upon their repentance. When the *Prodigal Son* in the *Parable*, after all his riot and lewdness came to himself and resolv'd to return home, *his Father seeing him yet afar off* coming towards him, *came out to meet him, and had compassion on him and kissed him.* And can any of us be so obstinate and hard-hearted as not presently to resolve to repent and return, and to meet the compassions of such a Father? Who, after we have offended him to the uttermost, is upon the first discovery of our repentance ready to be as kind to us, as he could possibly have been if we had never offended him.

And much more is God ready to receive a Nation upon their sincere Repentance; when his Judgments must needs make great havock, and so many are like to suffer under them. This Consideration God urgeth and pleads with his froward Prophet, in behalf of the great City of *Niniveh*. *And shall not I spare that great City of* Niniveh, *wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons, who cannot discern their right hand from their left?* that is, so many innocent Children, by which we may judge of the vast number of Jon

the

the rest of the Inhabitants. For this is a great consideration with God in his sending of Publick Calamities, the multitude of the Sufferers; and that not only the guilty but the innocent also, without a special and miraculous Providence, must be involved in a common Calamity.

Sometimes God respites his Judgments upon the mere external humiliation of a People and some formal testimonies and expressions of their repentance. When the People of *Israel sought God and enquired early after him*, though *they did but flatter him with their mouth*, and *their heart was not right with him*, yet the *Psalmist* tells us, *that being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not*; that is, he forgave them so far as to respite their ruin.

Psal. 78.

And much more will a sincere and effectual Repentance stay God's hand, and infallibly turn him from the fierceness of his anger: Insomuch that after he had fix'd and determin'd the very Day for the Destruction of *Niniveh*, and had engaged the credit of his Prophet in it, yet as soon as *he saw their works, and that they turned from their evil ways*, and how glad was he to see it? he presently *repented of the evil which he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not.* In this Case God does not stand upon the reputation of his Prophet, by whom he had sent so peremptory a Message to them; but his Mercy breaks through all considerations, and *rejoyceth against judgment*: For he cannot find in his heart to ruin those who by the terror of his Judgments will be brought to repentance.

And this surely is a mighty motive and encouragement to repentance, to be assur'd that we shall find mercy; and that when our ruin is even decreed, and all the instruments of God's wrath are fix'd and ready for execution, and his hand is just taking hold of vengeance, yet even then a sincere repentance will mitigate his hottest displeasure and turn away his wrath. And if we will not come in upon these terms, we extort the Judgments of God from him, and force him to depart from us, and with violent hands we pull down vengeance upon our own heads.

III. *Thirdly* and lastly, the *Text* intimates to us the miserable case and condition of a People when God takes off his heart and affection from them, when he gives over all further care and concernment for them, and abandons them to their own wickedness and folly, and to the miserable effects and consequences thereof: *Wo unto them, when his Soul departs from them*: For then all sorts of evils and calamities will rush in, and *wrath will come upon them to the uttermost*; as was threaten'd to the *Jews* a little before their final destruction, and executed upon them in the most terrible and amazing manner that ever was from the foundation of the World. *These*, as our Blessed Saviour expresses it, were *days of vengeance* indeed, that *all things which were written*, that is, foretold by *Moses* and the *Prophets* concerning the fearful end of this perverse and stiff-neck'd People, *might be fulfilled.*

And because my Text speaks to *Jerusalem, Be thou instructed, O* Jerusalem, *lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited*; though this was spoken to *Jerusalem* before her Captivity into *Babylon*, yet because this first Captivity was but a faint Type of her last and final Desolation by the *Romans*, when *God's Soul* was indeed *departed from Her*, and *Judea* was *left desolate, a Land not inhabited*: I shall therefore briefly represent to you the full effect of this Threatning in her last final Destruction, when *God's Soul* was, as it were, perfectly *loosen'd* and *disjointed* from Her: That you may see what the fierceness and power of God's Anger is, when *he departs from them*, and *wrath comes upon them to the uttermost*, because they would not be *instructed and know the time of their visitation.*

Thus it was with the *Jews*, about forty years after the Passion of our

*Lord*, whom *with wicked hands they had crucified and slain*: Then was God's soul *departed from them*: Then darkness and desolation came upon them; and they were in a far worse condition than a Country would be that is forsaken of the Sun and left condemn'd to a perpetual Night, in which darkness and disorder, faction and fury do reign and rage; together with all the evil consequences of *zeal and strife*, which, St *James* tells us, are *confusion and every evil work*. For when God is once gone, all the good and happiness of mankind departs together with him: Then men fall foul upon one another, divide into Parties and Factions, and execute the vengeance of God upon themselves with their own hands.

Thus it happen'd to the *Jewish Nation*, when the measure of their iniquity was full and their final ruin was approaching. And that we might know their Fate, and be instructed by it, God provided and preserv'd a faithful Historian on purpose, who was an Eye witness of all that befel them: I mean *Josephus*, who was personally engaged, and was a considerable Commander in the Wars of the *Jews* with the *Romans*, before the Siege of *Jerusalem*: And during the Siege was present in the *Roman* Camp, and being a *Jew* himself hath transmitted these things to Posterity in a most exact and admirable *History*: such a History, as no man that hath the heart and bowels of a man can read without the greatest pity and astonishment.

In the Preface of that lamentable *History*, he tells us, *that all the misfortunes and calamities which the World from the beginning of it had [illegible] compared with this last Calamity of the* Jewish *Nation, were but slight and inconsiderable*. He tells us likewise, that their *Civil Dissensions* were the next and immediate cause of their confusion and ruin.

And this more than once: For when *Pompey*, about sixty years before our Saviour's birth, sate down before *Jerusalem*, he tells us, that the Factions and Divisions which they had among themselves were the cause of the taking the City and Temple at that time. And when they rebelled afterwards, that the Heads of their Factions provok'd the *Romans*, and brought them unwillingly upon them, and at last forced the best natur'd Prince in the World, *Titus Vespasian*, to that severity which he most earnestly desired by all means to have prevented. And he further tells us, that even before the Siege of *Jerusalem* the Cities of *Judea* had all of them Civil Discords among themselves, and that in every City one part of the *Jews* fought against another.

And when *Jerusalem* began to be besieged, What a miserable condition was it in by the cruelty of the *Zealots* under the command of *John* the Son of *Giorah*? And presently after another Faction arose under *Simon*, who enter'd into the City with a fresh Force and assaulted the *Zealots* in the Temple: so that most miserable havock was made between them. And then a *third* Faction started up under *Eleazer*, as bad as either of the other: So that infinite almost were the numbers of the People within the City that were barbarously slain by these Seditions.

And what an infatuation was this? when the Enemy was at the Gates and ready to break in upon them, to employ their whole strength and force against one another: When the same courage and fury, which they spent so freely upon themselves, had it been turn'd with the like desperateness and obstinacy upon the *Romans*, might have endanger'd the whole force of the *Roman* Empire. Once or twice indeed they seem'd to lay aside their enmity for a little while, and to unite in the common defence; but as soon as the danger of a present assault was over, they relaps'd into their former state of intestine enmity and dissention, as if that had been their main business, and the preservation of their City against the *Romans* only a work by the by, and not much to be regarded.

And

And to add to all their other miseries, they were so blinded by their own rage and madness, that they wilfully brought upon themselves an extreme Famine. For, as the *Historian* tells us, they themselves set on fire vast stores of Corn and other necessaries, sufficient to have serv'd them for many years; and by this means the City was much sooner reduc'd, even by a Famine of their own making, and which could not have been brought upon them but by themselves.

This Famine, besides all the other miseries and cruelties which it occasion'd within the City, did force great numbers of them to steal out by night into the *Roman* Camp; where they met with as cruel but a speedier death. For *Titus*, in hope to reduce them the sooner by terrour, order'd all those that came out of the City to be crucified before the Walls. Which order was so severely executed, that for several days five hundred a day were crucified, till there was neither room left to place Crosses in, nor Wood whereof to make them: So that they who once cried out so vehemently against our *Saviour*, *Crucifie him*, *Crucifie him*, had enough of it at last, and by the just and most remarkable Judgments of God were paid home in their own kind.

Behold the sad Fate of a sinful People, when God is departed from them! Then all evils overtake them at once. For as their misery increased, so did their Impiety to that degree, that the *Historian* tells us, *they scorned and*
Lib. 5. c. 2. *mocked at all divine and holy things, and derided the Oracles of the Prophets, esteeming them no better than Fables*; and, in a word, were carried to that extremity of wickedness, as not only to prophane their *Temple* in the highest manner, and to break the Laws of their own Religion, but even to violate the Laws of Nature and Humanity in the grossest Instances: which made their *Historian* to give that dismal character of them, *that as he thought no*
Lib. 6. c. 11. *City ever suffer'd such things, so no Nation, from the beginning of the World, did ever so abound in all manner of wickedness and impiety*: A certain sign that *God's Soul* was *departed* from them.

And the same *Historian* afterwards, upon consideration of the lamentable state into which their Seditions had brought them, breaks out into this doleful lamentation over them, *O miserable City! what didst thou suffer from the* Romans, *though at last they set thee on fire to purge thee from thy sins, that is to*
Lib. 7. c. 1. *be compar'd with those miseries which thou hast brought upon thy self?*

To such a dismal state did things come at last, that, as the same *Historian* relates, *many of the* Jews *prayed for the good success of their Enemies, to deliver them from their civil Dissensions, the Calamity whereof was so great, that their final Destruction by the* Romans *did rather put an end to their misery than increase it*,

*——En! quo discordia Cives*
*Perduxit miseros——*

To conclude this sad Story. It was the *Jews* themselves that by their own folly and dissensions forc'd the *Romans* to this sorrowful Victory over them; for in truth all the remorse and pity was on the Enemies side. The *Romans* were little more than Spectators in this cruel Tragedy, the *Jews* acted it upon themselves: And they only who were arriv'd at that prodigious height of impiety and wickedness were fit to be the executioners of this vengeance of God upon one another. As if the *Prophet* had foretold this, when he says,
Jer. 2. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee.*

When impiety and wickedness are at their highest pitch in a Nation, then they themselves are the only proper instruments to punish one another. The *Romans* were by far too good and gentle to inflict a suffering upon the *Jews* that was equal to the evil of their doings: None but their own barbarous

Selves,

Selves, who were sunk down into the very lowest degeneracy of humane nature, were capable of so much cruelty and inhumanity as was requisite to execute the Judgment of God upon them to that degree which their sins had deserved.

You see, my Brethren, by what hath been said upon this Argument, what were the *Faults*, and what the *Fate* of the *Jewish* Nation. Now *these things*, as the *Apostle* expresly tells us, *were written for our Admonition*, and to the intent that *we upon whom the ends of the World are come* might be instructed by them: *We*, I say, who next to the *Jewish* Nation seem to be a People highly favoured by God above all the Nations of the Earth. We resemble them very much in their many and wonderful Deliverances, and a great deal too much in their Faults and Follies.

But as I intend it not, so God forbid that there should be any just ground for a full and exact Parallel between us; Yet this I must say, that nothing ever came nearer to them than We do in several respects. In our ficklenefs and inconstancy, in our murmurings and discontents; for we are never pleas'd with what God does, neither when he brings us into danger, nor when he delivers us out of it: We resemble them likewise in our horrible prophaneness and infidelity, and in our impiety and wickedness of several kinds: in our monstrous ingratitude and most unworthy returns to the God of our Salvation: and lastly, in our Factions and Divisions, which were the fatal sign of God's being departed from the *Jews*, and the immediate cause and means of those dismal Calamities which wrought their final Ruin. And how can we chuse but dread lest their Fate should overtake us, the Example of whose Faults and Follies we do in so many things so nearly resemble?

That this may not, nor any thing like it, be our Fate, let us apply our selves to the great Duties of this day; a serious and deep Repentance, and Humiliation of our selves before Almighty God for the many and heinous Sins which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of, against His Divine Majesty; by our prophaneness and impiety, by our lewdness and luxury, by our oppression and injustice, by our implacable malice and hatred one towards another, and by our senseless divisions and animosities one against another, without cause and without end: By our neglect of God's Worship and prophanation of his Holy Day, and by our dreadful abuse of God's great and glorious Name in those horrid Oaths and Curses and Imprecations which are heard almost day and night in the streets of this great City.

For these and all other our innumerable provocations of the patience and goodness and long-suffering of God towards us, let us sadly repent our selves this Day, and *turn unto the Lord with all our hearts, with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rent our hearts and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God; For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil: And who knoweth if he will return and repent and leave a blessing behind him? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned: Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.*

And let us earnestly beg of Him, that he would be pleased to prevent those terrible Judgments and Calamities which hang over us, and which our Sins have so justly deserved should fall upon us: And that He would perfect that wonderful Deliverance which he hath begun for us, and *establish the thing which he hath wrought*: That He would bless *Them* whom he hath set in Authority over us; and particularly, that he would preserve the Person of the *King* in his present Expedition, and crown him with victory and good success.

And to our Repentance and Prayers let us add our liberal Alms, and according to the counsel given by the *Prophet* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, let us *break*

*off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if so be it may be a lengthning of our tranquility.*

We are yet, blessed be God, in the full enjoyment of Peace and Quiet at home, and of our Religion and Civil Liberties. God hath given us two excellent Princes sitting on the Throne together, and both of the same Religion with the main Body of the Nation; and as bright Examples of Piety and Goodness as *England* ever saw: And who do by all ways and means study and seek the good of the People committed to their charge.

So that if we did but know our own happiness, and how to value it, we might be the happiest People this day under Heaven: And yet for all this, we are very far from being happy; because we are neither contented, nor united; and though we have all the materials of Happiness about us, and within our reach, yet have we not the skill and wisdom to put them together.

Miserable People! that may be happy and will not; whom neither so fresh a Deliverance from so great a Danger as was just ready to have swallowed us up, nor the fear and apprehension of falling again into the like confusion, can be a warning to us from returning again unto the same folly: For those odious and unhappy Names of Difference which some years ago sprang up among us, the Devil knows how, did seem whilst a common danger threatned us, to be quite dead and buried: But no sooner was the danger over, but by a kind of *miraculous* infatuation, behold a sudden *Resurrection* of them, with greater heats and animosities, if possible, than before: Just as it was with the *Jews* in the Siege of *Jerusalem*, when the *Romans* had made a wide breach and the City was furiously assaulted, the Factions then gave *Truce* to one another, and ran in to the common defence; but as soon as ever the danger was a little over, they fell on afresh and prosecuted their main design of destroying one another.

And now that the danger is a little over with us also, how like a Fate upon us does it look, that we are so soon alter'd from our wiser and better temper? Did we well and wisely before our late happy Revolution, when we united for our common defence against a common danger, and did let those *unlucky Names* of distinction fall, so that they seem'd to be quite extinguish'd? And can it be now wise to revive them, and to take them up again; when the same danger in some degree, and from the same implacable Enemies, still hovers over us? No surely, it would not be wise, if the danger were quite past and over; but when it still remains and threatens us, what greater folly and infatuation can there be than still to divide and quarrel among our selves? Will nothing but sad and bitter experience be an admonition to us? Will nothing but the last necessity and extremity of things bring us to our selves and teach us wisdom?

Methinks we should all now be glad to be at rest, after the tedious troubles and distractions, the fruitless quarrels and divisions of fifty years. So long I remember; and in all that space how very few years pass'd over us without some great Calamity and dismal Event. So that by this time one would think we should all be sick of our own follies, and so tir'd with our unprofitable feuds and dissentions, as to make both sides look about them, to see if any body will take pity on us, and step in to part our quarrels.

And now I begin to be sensible, that I have engag'd in a tender Point indeed; and do feel my self standing upon a very slippery place. For who is fit to interpose in such hot and fierce differences? who can do it without danger, or with any hopes of success? And yet for *Zion's* sake *I will not hold my peace*, for *Jerusalem's* sake *I will not keep silence*: Of so great consequence is it

to

to the peace and happiness of this Church and Nation, that these Names and Distinctions of Parties should be laid down and abolish'd for ever.

In order whereunto I take it for granted and lay it for a Principle, that he who hopes to perswade both sides must provoke neither: And therefore I will not so much as enquire where the fault lyes. It is in these Civil Differences as in Family quarrels between Man and Wife, if any man ask on which side lyes the fault; one may almost safely answer at a venture, on both sides. It must indeed begin on one, but if it be not presently heal'd and made up, the other Party is always so civil as to run in and take a share of the fault, that all the blame may not lye wholly on one side.

And now, my Brethren, let me for once perswade and prevail with you for your good: Let me be so happy as to say something that may sink into your hearts, and incline your minds to peace and good agreement with one another, *Have salt in your selves*, says our *Blessed Saviour* the great *Peace-maker*, *and peace one with another*. By *Salt* is meant grace and spiritual wisdom, and if *that* do but rule and sway in our hearts, we shall then endeavour, *if it be possible*, *and as much as in us lyes*, *to live peaceably with all men*. If we *have salt in our selves*, that is, if we be wise, we will then certainly *have peace one with another*.

And if we were but once come to this healing temper, in this divided and distracted Nation, we should not then need to fear *all the power of the Enemy*. And this our Enemies know full well: and therefore their chief policy and wisdom is, and ever hath been, to divide us; and it will be our own great folly and weakness if we suffer our selves to be divided: For who that is wise will take counsel and advice from an Enemy? But if we could agree and hold together, then our *Jerusalem* would be *as a City that is compact together*, strong and impregnable.

Let us then *be instructed*, and *know*, *in this our day*, *the things which belong to our Peace*, *before they be hid from our eyes*. And let us all earnestly endeavour *and pray for the peace of* Jerusalem: *They shall prosper that love her*, says the *Psalmist*, and they do not love her, that do not seek her peace and endeavour by all means to procure it: *That Peace may be within her Walls*, *and Prosperity within her Palaces*: The one cannot be without the other: without Peace there can be no Prosperity. And to go on with the words of the *Psalmist*, let every one of us say, yea let us all with one heart and voice say, *for our Brethren and Companions sake*, for the sake of our *Protestant* Brethren all the World over, let us say, *Peace be within thee: For the House of the Lord our God*, for the sake of our Holy Religion, and of that excellent Church whereof we all are, or ought to be Members, let every one of us say, *I will seek thy good*. Psal. 122.

And what greater good can we do to the best Religion, how can we better serve the interest of it in all parts of the World, than by being at peace and unity amongst our selves, here in *England*? upon whom the eyes of all the *Protestants* abroad are fixed, as the Glory of the *Reformation*, and the great bulwark and support of it.

That so under the Providence of Almighty God, and the conduct of two such excellent Princes as He hath now bless'd us withal: The one so brave and valiant, and Both of them so wise, so good, so religious, we may at last arrive at a firm establishment, and become *like mount* Zion *that cannot* be moved, the perfection of Beauty and Strength, and the admiration and *joy of the whole Earth*; which God of his infinite goodness grant, for his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom, with thee O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, thanksgiving and praise both now and ever, *Amen*.

# SERMON XXXVIII.

## *A Conscience void of Offence towards God and Men.*

## Preached before the Queen at *WHITEHALL*, *February* the 27th. 169⁰₁.

### Acts XXVI. 16.

*And herein do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men.*



THese words are part of the Defence which St. *Paul* made for himself before *Fælix* the *Roman* Governour.

In which he first of all vindicates himself from the charge of Sedition, *verſ.* 12. *They neither found me in the Temple, disputing with any man; neither raising up the People, neither in the Synagogue, nor in the City*; that is, they could not charge him with making any disturbance either in Church or State.

After this, he makes a free and open profession of his Religion, *verſ.* 14. *But this I confess, that after the way which they call Heresie, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets:* Here he declares the *Scriptures* to be the *Rule* of his *Faith*, in opposition to the *Oral Tradition* of the *Pharisees*.

More particularly he asserts the Doctrine of the *Resurrection*, which was a principal *Article* both of the *Jewish* and the *Christian Religion*, *verſ.* 15. *And I have hope also towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection, both of the just and the unjust.*

And having made this declaration of his *Faith*, he gives an account of his *Life*, in the words of the *Text*, *verſ.* 16. *And herein do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards Men.*

Herein, ἐν τούτῳ, that is, *in this work*, do I employ my self; or as others render it, *in the mean time*, whilst I am in this World; or as others, I think most probably, *for this cause and reason*, ἐν τούτῳ, for διὰ τοῦτο, for this reason, because I believe a Resurrection, therefore have I a conscientious care of my life, and all the actions of it.

The Discourse I intend to make upon these words, shall be comprized in these following Particulars.

I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice, *to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards men.*

II. Here

II. Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course; to have *always* a conscience void of offence.

III. Here is his earnest care and endeavour to this purpose, *I exercise my self.*

IV. Here is the principle and immediate Guide of his Actions, which St. *Paul* here tells us was his *Conscience.*

V. I shall lay down some Rules and Directions for the keeping of a good Conscience.

VI. Here is the great motive and encouragement to this, which St. *Paul* tells us was the belief of a Resurrection, and of a future State of Rewards and Punishments consequent upon it; *for this cause*; because *I hope for a Resurrection both of the just and unjust, I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* I shall speak but briefly to the *three* first of these Particulars, that I may be larger in the rest.

I. *Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice.* It hath regard to the whole compass of his Duty, as it respects *God* and *Man. I exercise my self* says St. *Paul, to have a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* And this distribution of our Duty, under these two general Heads, is very frequent in Scripture. The *Decalogue* refers our Duty to these two Heads: And accordingly our Saviour comprehends the whole Duty of Man in those two great Commandments, the *love* of *God* and of our *Neighbour, Matth.* 22 38. *Upon these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets,* that is, all the *Moral* Precepts, which are dispers'd up and down in the Law and the Prophets, may be referr'd to these two general Heads. I.

II. *Here is his constancy and perseverance in this course.* St. *Paul* says, that he exercised himself to have *always* a conscience void of offence; διαπαντὸς, *continually*, at all times, in the whole course of his life. We must not only make conscience of our ways by fits and starts, but in the general course and tenour of our lives and actions, without any balks and intermissions. II.

There are some that will refrain from grosser Sins, and be very strict at some Seasons; as during the Time of a Solemn Repentance, and for some days before they receive the Sacrament; and perhaps for a little while after it: And when these devout Seasons are over, they let themselves loose again to their former lewd and vitious course: But Religion should be a constant frame and temper of mind, discovering it self in the habitual course of our lives and actions.

III. *Here is likewise a very earnest care and endeavour to this purpose.* Herein do I *exercise* my self, says St. *Paul.* The word ἀσκῶ, which is here render'd *exercise*, is a word of a very intense signification, and does denote that St. *Paul* applied himself to this business with all his care and might, and that he made it his earnest study and endeavour: And so must we; we must take great care to understand our duty, and to be rightly informed concerning *good* and *evil*, that we may not mistake the nature of things, and *call good evil, and evil good*: We must apply our minds in good earnest to be throughly instructed in all the parts of our Duty, that so we may not be at a loss what to do when we are call'd to the practice of it. And when we know our Duty, we must be true and honest to our selves, and very careful and conscientious in the discharge and performance of it. I proceed in the III.

IVth Place to consider the *principle and immediate Guide of our Actions,* which St. *Paul* here tells us was his *Conscience*; *I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence*: By which he does not only mean a resolution to follow the dictate and direction of his Conscience, but likewise a due care to inform his Conscience aright, that he might not in any thing transgress the Law of God, and his Duty. IV.

Conscience

Conſcience is the great Principle of moral Actions, and our Guide in matter of Sin and Duty. It is not the Law and Rule of our Actions, *that* the Law of God only is; but it is our immediate Guide and Director, telling us what is the Law of God and our Duty.

But becauſe *Conſcience* is a word of a very large and various ſignification, I ſhall endeavour very briefly to give you the true notion of it. Now in common ſpeech concerning *Conſcience*, every man is repreſented as having a kind of *Court* and *Tribunal* in his own breaſt, where he tries himſelf and all his Actions: And *Conſcience*, under one Notion or other, ſuſtains all parts in this Trial: The *Court* is called the *Court* of a man's *Conſcience*, and the *Barr* at which the Sinner ſtands impleaded, is call'd the *Barr* of *Conſcience*: *Conſcience* alſo is the *Accuſer*; and it is the *Record* and *Regiſter* of our Crimes, in which the memory of them is preſerv'd: And it is the *Witneſs* which gives teſtimony for, or againſt us; hence are thoſe expreſſions of *the teſtimony of our Conſciences*, and that *a man's own Conſcience is to him inſtead of a thouſand Witneſſes*: And it is likewiſe the *Judge* which declares the Law, and what we ought, or ought not to have done, in ſuch or ſuch a Caſe, and accordingly paſſeth *Sentence* upon us by *acquitting* or *condemning* us. Thus, according to common uſe of Speech, *Conſcience* ſuſtains all imaginable parts in this *Spiritual Court*: It is the *Court*, and the *Bench*, and the *Barr*; the *Accuſer*, and *Witneſs*, and *Regiſter*, and all.

But I ſhall only at preſent conſider *Conſcience* in the moſt common and famous Notion of it, as it is the Principle or Faculty whereby we judge of moral Good and Evil, and do accordingly direct and govern our Actions: So that in ſhort, *Conſcience* is nothing elſe but *the Judgment of a man's own mind concerning the morality of his actions*; that is, the *Good*, or *Evil*, or *Indifferency* of them; telling us what things are commanded by God, and conſequently are our *Duty*; what things are forbidden by Him, and conſequently are *ſinful*; what things are neither commanded nor forbidden, and conſequently are *indifferent*. I proceed in the

Vth Place, *to give ſome Rules and Directions for the keeping of a conſcience void of offence*. And they ſhall be theſe following:

*Firſt*, Never in any caſe to act contrary to the perſwaſion and conviction of our Conſcience. For *that* certainly is a great Sin, and that which properly offends the Conſcience and renders us *guilty*; *guilt* being nothing elſe but trouble ariſing in our minds from a conſciouſneſs of having done contrary to what we are verily perſwaded was our Duty: And though perhaps this perſwaſion is not always well grounded, yet the guilt is the ſame ſo long as this perſwaſion continues; becauſe every man's Conſcience is a kind of God to him, and accuſeth or abſolves him according to the preſent perſwaſion of it. And therefore we ought to take great care not to offend againſt the light and conviction of our own mind.

*Secondly*, We ſhould be very careful to inform our Conſciences aright, that we may not miſtake concerning our Duty; or if we do, that our errour and miſtake may not be groſly wilful and faulty.

And this Rule is the more neceſſary to be conſider'd and regarded by us, becauſe generally men are apt to think it a ſufficient excuſe for any thing, that they did it according to their Conſcience. But this will appear to be a dangerous miſtake, and of very pernicious conſequence to the Souls of men, if we conſider theſe two things.

*1ſt*, That men may be guilty of the moſt heinous Sins in following an erroneous Conſcience.

*2ly*, And theſe Sins may prove damnable without a particular repentance for them.

*1ſt*, That

1*st*, *That men may be guilty of the most heinous Sins, in following an erroneous Conscience.* Men may neglect and abuse themselves so far, as to do some of the worst and wickedest things in the World with a perswasion that they do well. Our *Saviour* tells his Disciples that *the time should come* when the *Jews* should *put them to death, thinking they did God good service*: Nay, the *Jews* murthered the Son of God himself through ignorance and a false perswasion of mind: *Father, forgive them,* says our *Blessed Lord,* when he was breathing out his Soul upon the Cross, *for they know not what they do.* And St. *Peter,* after he had charged the *Jews with killing the Prince of Life,* he presently adds, *I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers.* And St. *Paul,* in mitigation of that great Crime, says, *Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Life and Glory*: And concerning himself, he tells us, *That he verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things against the Name of* Jesus *of* Nazareth: And yet notwithstanding that he acted herein according to the perswasion of his Conscience, he tells us that he had been *a blasphemer,* and *a persecutor,* and *injurious,* and a *murtherer,* and in a word, *the greatest of Sinners.* So that men may be guilty of the greatest Sins in following an erroneous Conscience. And,

John 16. 2.

Luke 23. 34.

Acts 3. 17.

Acts 26. 9.

2*ly*, *These sins may prove damnable, without a particular repentance for them.* Where the ignorance and mistake is not grossly wilful, there God will accept of a general repentance; but where it is grossly wilful, great Sins committed upon it are not pardon'd without a particular Repentance for them: And an errour which proceeds from want of ordinary humane Care and due Government of a man's self, is in a great degree wilful: As when it proceeds from an unreasonable and obstinate prejudice, from great pride and self-conceit, and contempt of counsel and instruction; or from a visible byass of self interest, or when it is accompanied with a furious passion and zeal, prompting men to cruel and horrible things, contrary to the light of nature and the common sense of humanity: An errour proceeding from such causes, and producing such effects, is wilful in so high a degree, that whatever evil is done in virtue of it is almost equally faulty with a direct and wilful violation of the law of God.

The ignorance and mistake doth indeed make the person so mistaken more capable of forgiveness, which is the ground of our *Saviour*'s Prayer for his Murtherers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*: St. *Paul* likewise tells us, that he found mercy upon this account, *Nevertheless,* says he, *I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief,* that is, through a false perswasion of mind, not believing it to be a Sin: And yet he did not obtain this mercy, without a particular conviction of his fault and repentance for it. And St. *Peter* after he had convinced the *Jews* of their great Sin in crucifying *Christ,* though they did it ignorantly, yet he exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as necessary to the pardon and forgiveness of it: And therefore after he had said, *I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your Rulers*; he immediately adds, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out.*

1 Tim. 1. 13.

Acts 3. 19.

So that it highly concerns men to consider what opinions they embrace in order to practice, and not to suffer themselves to be hurried away by an unreasonable prejudice and a heady passion, without a due and calm examination of things, nor to be over-born by pride, or humour, or partiality, or interest, or by a furious and extravagant zeal: Because proportionably to the voluntariness of our Errour will be the guilt of our practice pursuant to that Errour. Indeed where our Errour is involuntary, and morally invincible, God will consider it, and make allowance for it; but where it is voluntary,

and occasioned by our own gross faults and neglect, we are bound to consider, and to rectifie our mistake: For whatever we do contrary to the Law of God and our Duty, in virtue of that false perswasion, we do it at our utmost peril, aud must be answerable to God for it, notwithstanding we did it according to the dictate of our Conscience.

A *Third* Rule is this, that in all doubts of Conscience we endeavour to be equal and impartial, and do not lay all the weight of our doubts on one side, when there is perhaps as much or greater reason of doubting on the other: And consequently, that we be as tractable and easie to receive satisfaction of our doubts in one kind as in another, and be equally contented to have them over-ruled in Cases that are equal: I mean, where our Passions and Interests are not concern'd, as well as where they are. And if we do not do this, it is a sign that we are partial in our pretences of Conscience, and that we do not aim meerly at the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, but have some other interest and design.

For it is a very suspicious thing, when men's doubts and scruples bear all on one side, especially if it be on that side which is against Charity, and Peace, and obedience to Government, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil: In this case I think that a meer doubt, and much more a scruple, may, nay, ought in reason to be over-ruled by the Command of Authority, by the opinion and judgment of wise and good men, and in consideration of the publick Peace, and of the unity and edification in the Church.

Not that a man is in any case to go against the clear perswasion and conviction of his own mind, but when there is only a meer doubt concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a thing, it seems to me in that case very reasonable that a man should suffer a meer doubt or scruple to be over-rul'd by any of those weighty considerations which I mention'd before.

The *Fourth* Rule is, that all pretences of Conscience are vehemently to be suspected, which are accompanied with turbulent passion and a furious zeal. It is an hundred to one but such a man's Conscience is in the wrong.

Jam. 1. 20. It is an excellent saying of St. *James*, *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, that is, the fierce passions of men are no proper instruments to promote Religion, and to accomplish any thing that is good. And therefore if any man be transported with a wild zeal, and pretend conscience for his fury, it is great odds but he is in an errour: None are so likely to judge amiss, as they whose minds are clouded and blinded by their passions.

Boeth. *Nubila mens est,*
*Hæc ubi regnant,*

And if men would carefully observe themselves, they might almost certainly know when they act upon Reason and a true Principle of Conscience, A good Conscience is easie to it self, and pleased with its own doings; but when a man's passion and discontent are a weight upon his judgment, and do, as it were, bear down his Conscience to a compliance, no wonder if this puts a man's mind into a very unnatural and uneasie state.

There can hardly be a broader sign that a man is in the wrong, than to *rage and be confident*: Because this plainly shews that the man's Conscience is not settled upon clear reason, but that he hath brought over his Conscience to his interest, or to his humour and discontent.

And though such a man may be so far blinded by his passion as not to *see* what is right, yet methinks he should *feel* himself to be in the wrong by his being so very hot and impatient.

Art thou sure thou art in the right? thou art a happy man, and hast reason to be pleased: What cause then, what need is there of being angry? Hath

a man Reaſon on his ſide? What would he have more? Why then does he fly out into paſſion? which as it gives no ſtrength to a bad argument, ſo I could never yet ſee that it was any grace and advantage to a good one.

Of the great evil, and the perpetual miſtake of this furious kind of Zeal, the *Jews* are a lively and a lamentable Example, in their carriage towards our Bleſſed *Saviour* and his Apoſtles: And more particularly St. *Paul*, when he perſecuted the *Chriſtians* from a falſe and erroneous perſwaſion of his Conſcience. Hear how St. *Paul* deſcribes himſelf and his own doings whilſt he was acted by an erroneous Conſcience: *I perſecuted*, ſays he, *this way unto the death, binding and delivering into priſon both men and women*: And in another *Chapter*, *I verily thought with my ſelf, that I ought to do many things againſt the Name of* Jeſus *of* Nazareth: Here was his erroneous Conſcience. Let us next ſee what were the unhappy concomitants and effects of it; *verſ.* 10, 11. *Which things*, ſays he, *I alſo did in* Jeruſalem, *and many of the Saints I ſhut up in priſon, and when they were put to death I gave my voice againſt them, and puniſh'd them oft in every Synagogue, and compell'd them to blaſpheme; and being exceedingly mad againſt them, I perſecuted them even to ſtrange Cities.* When Conſcience tranſports men with ſuch a furious zeal and paſſion, it is hardly ever in the right; or if it ſhould happen to be ſo, they who are thus tranſported, by their ungracious way of maintaining the truth, and their ill management of a good cauſe, have found out a cunning way to be in the wrong, even when they are in the right. Acts 22. 4. Acts 26. 9.

*Fifthly*, All pretences of Conſcience are likewiſe to be ſuſpected, which are not accompanied with modeſty and humility, and a teachable temper and diſpoſition, willing to learn and to be better inform'd. A proud and conceited temper of mind is very likely to run into miſtakes; becauſe pride and fulneſs of a man's ſelf does keep out knowledge, and obſtructs all the paſſages by which wiſdom and inſtruction ſhould enter into men: Beſides that it provokes God to abandon men to their own follies and miſtakes; for *God reſiſteth the proud*, but *the meek will he guide in judgment*, and *will give more grace* and wiſdom *to the humble*. When men are once come to this, to think themſelves wiſer than their Teachers, and to deſpiſe and caſt off their Guides, no wonder if *then* they go aſtray.

*Laſtly*, Let us be ſure to mind that which is our plain and unqueſtionable Duty: the great things of Religion, wherein the life and ſubſtance of it doth conſiſt; and *the things* likewiſe *which make for peace, and whereby we may edifie one another*: And let us not ſuffer our Diſputes about leſſer matters to prejudice and hinder our main duty: But let it be our great care not to fail in thoſe greater things which are comprehended under the *two great Commandments of the Law*, the *Love* of *God* and of our *Neighbour*: Let us be ſtrict and conſtant in our piety and devotion towards *God*; chaſt and temperate in reference to *our ſelves*; juſt and honeſt, kind and charitable, humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards *all men*; ſubmiſſive and obedient to our *Superiours, Natural, Civil*, and *Spiritual*. A due regard to theſe great Virtues of the *Chriſtian* life is the way to *keep a conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards men*: And ſurely the beſt means to have our doubts cleared about matters of leſſer moment in Religion, is heartily to ſet about the practice of the great and unqueſtionable Duties of it: So our *Bleſſed Saviour* hath aſſur'd us, that *if any man will do the will of* God, *he ſhall know of* his *Doctrine whether it be of* God. I come now in the John 7. 17.

VIth and *Laſt* place, to *conſider the great Motive and Encouragement to this conſcientious care of our Lives and Actions*; which St. *Paul* here tells us was his belief of a *Reſurrection*, and of the Rewards and Puniſhments conſe- VI.

quent upon it; *I have hope*, says he, *towards God, that there shall be a Resurrection both of the just and unjust: For this cause* therefore *I exercise my self to have always a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward men.*

If we believe *the Resurrection of the dead* and *a future judgment*, we ought to be very careful to discharge a good Conscience *now*, in order to the rendring of a good *Account* hereafter; that *we may be sincere and without offence, with respect to the day of Christ*, as the *Apostle* expresseth it. For when that great Day of Recompences shall come, we shall most assuredly find that nothing will *then* raise our hearts, and make us to lift up our heads with joy, like the witness of a good Conscience: And therefore we should make that our constant care and companion *now*, which will *then* be our great comfort and rejoycing, a good Conscience and *the testimony* of it, *that in all simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.*

And on the contrary, when we come to appear before the Great Judge of the World, nothing will fill our minds with so much terrour, and our faces with so much confusion, as the clamorous accusations of a guilty Conscience; which will be *more than a thousand witnesses* against us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and pass almost as severe a Sentence upon us as the Judge himself can.

This is that which will make the sinner to droop, and to hang down his head for ever: And one of the principal ingredients of his misery and torment will be the perpetual regret and remorse of his own mind for his wilful wickedness and folly; which will kindle a fire within him as hot as that without him, and as hard to be quench'd.

This consideration ought to have a mighty Operation upon us to make us very careful to have Consciences void of offence *now*, that they may be free from torment and anguish *hereafter*: That when we shall come into the other World, we may not be eternally displeas'd with our selves, and enrag'd at our own doings; but may carry with us thither Consciences clear of all guilt, either by Innocency, or by Repentance.

The firm belief of a future state of eternal Happiness or Misery in another World, is the great Weight or Spring that sets a going those two powerful Principles of Humane Activity, the Hopes and the Fears of men; and is in its Nature so fitted to raise these Passions to that degree, that did not experience shew us the contrary, one would think it morally impossible for humane Nature to resist the mighty force of it.

All men are sensible, more or less, at one time or other, of the true force of these Arguments; but the mischief is, that in some persons they work quite the wrong way, and instead of leading men to Repentance, they drive them to Infidelity: They cannot deny the force of these Arguments, if they were true; but that they may avoid the force of them, they will not believe them to be true: And so far they are in the right, that granting these things to be true, they cannot but acknowledge that they ought to live otherwise than they do: But here is their fatal miscarriage, that being resolved upon an evil course, since they cannot reconcile their practice with such Principles as these, they will fit their Principles to their practice; and so they will believe nothing at all of the Rewards and Punishments of another World, lest this should disturb them in their course? Vain men! as if Heaven and Hell must needs vanish and disappear, because some witty but wicked men have no mind to believe them.

These men are Infidels in their own defence, and merely for the quiet of their own minds; that their Consciences may not perpetually rate them, and fly in their faces. For a right Belief and an evil Conscience are but unsuitable

ble Companions; they are quarrelsome Neighbours, and must needs live very unkindly by one another. He that believes the Principles of Religion, and yet is conscious to himself that he hath liv'd contrary to them, and still continues to do so, how can he possibly have any peace and quiet in his mind? unless like *Jonah* he can sleep in a storm, and his *Conscience* be, as it were, *seared with a hot Iron*: For if his Conscience be awake, and in any degree sensible, the evident danger of eternal ruine, continually hanging over him, must in reason either drive him to repentance or to despair: If so forcible and violent an Argument can make no impression upon us, we are stupid and bewitch'd, we are lost and undone, we are wretched and miserable for ever.

But besides the future Reward of a holy and conscientious course, which is *unspeakable and full of* glory; it hath also this present fruit, this *earnest*, as I may say, and ready mony in hand, the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, which is much more valuable *than thousands of gold and silver*, the unspeakable comfort whereof every man will then find, when he hath most need of it: For it will be matter of great joy to him, not only under the sorest afflictions and calamities of Life, but even at the hour of Death; when the miseries of life oppress him, and the sorrows of death compass him about, and the pangs of it are ready to take hold of him.

There is certainly no such comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as a faithful witness in our breasts of our own innocency and integrity: When we are afflicted by God, or persecuted and revil'd by men, it cannot but be a mighty consolation to us to be conscious to our selves of our own sincerity. For though no man can acquit and justifie himself before God as to the perfect innocency of his life, in which sense St. *Paul* says, that *though he knew nothing by himself, yet was he not thereby justified*; I say, though no 1 Cor. 4. 4.
man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general course and tenour of an unblameable life, a good man may appeal to God, and even when he afflicts him, may look upon him as a tender and compassionate Father, and not as an angry and revengeful Judge.

With this, holy and patient *Job*, under all those terrible disasters and calamities which befel him, was able in some measure to comfort himself: After he had lost all, and he had a great a deal to lose; when he was forsaken of all other comfort, even the charitable opinion of his best Friends concerning his sincerity. In these sad and disconsolate circumstances, what was it that bore up his spirit? nothing but the conscience of his own integrity. See with what resolution and constancy of mind he asserts and maintains it: *I will not*, says he, *remove mine integrity from me: my righteousness will I hold fast, and* Job 27. 5, 6
*will not let it go: mine heart shall not reproach me, so long as I live*: You see, that when every thing else was gone, his integrity stuck by him, and supported him to the last.

And as to persecutions and sufferings from men, our own innocency, and the goodness of our Cause, will be our best comfort under them: When we are not guilty to our selves that we have deserv'd them from men, and are inwardly assur'd that whatever we patiently suffer for God and a good Conscience, will all turn to our account another Day, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*.

This was *that* which supported the first *Christians*, that *noble Army of Martyrs*, under all those bitter and cruel persecutions, which had otherwise been beyond all humane patience to have endur'd: This comforted them in all their tribulations; *Our rejoycing*, says St. *Paul*, *is this*, *the testimony of our consciences*, *that in simplicity and godly sincerity*, *we have had our conversation in the world*.

So likewise under that inferiour but equally malicious sort of persecution, of which this Age is so very profuse and prodigal, I mean the causeless Calumnies and Reproaches of Men: If under these we can but approve our Consciences to God, the uncharitable Censures of men are not so much to be regarded by us: some impression they will make upon a tender mind, but we must not, if we can help it, let them sink too deep into our spirits: *If our* 1 Joh. 3. 21. *hearts condemn us not, we may have confidence towards God*; and then surely much more towards *men*: If God and our own Consciences do but acquit us, methinks it should be no such difficult matter to bear the slanders and hard censures of men.

But above all other times, the comfort of a good Conscience is most sensible, and most considerable, at the hour of Death: For as nothing dejects a man's spirit more, and sends him down with so much sorrow to the Grave, as the guilt of an evil Conscience; what terrour and anguish, what rage and despair do seize upon a Sinner at that time, when he reflects upon what he hath done, and considers what he is like to suffer? So on the other hand, there is nothing that revives and raises the fainting spirits of a dying man, like the Conscience of a holy and useful life, which hath brought glory to God, and Prov. 14. 32. good to men. *The wicked,* says *Solomon, is driven away in his wickedness,* that is, he is carried out of the World, as it were, in a storm and tempest: *But the righteous hath hope in his death*; he usually dies calmly and comfortably: Psal. 37. 37. *Mark the perfect Man,* says *David, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.*

If a man be conscious to himself that he hath sincerely endeavour'd to keep the Commandments of God, and to do the things which please Him; if he Acts 23. 1. hath *lived* inoffensively, and, as St. *Paul* says of himself, *in all good conscience before God and men*; what an unspeakable consolation must it be to him, in that dark and gloomy time, and when he is *walking through the valley of the shadow of death,* then *to fear no evil*? and to be able with our *Blessed Saviour* to say, though in a much inferiour measure and degree, *Father,* John 17. 4. *I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do*: And to be able to look Death in the face with the like courage and constancy of mind as St. *Paul* did when he saw it approaching towards 2 Tim. 4. 6, 7, 8. him: *I am now,* says he, *ready to be offer'd, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day.* A comfortable Death, that is free from the stings and upbraidings, the terrours and tortures, the confusion and amazement of a guilty Conscience, is a happiness so desirable, as to be well worth the best care and endeavour of a man's whole life.

Let us then have a conscientious regard to the whole compass of our Duty, and with St. *Paul, Let us exercise our selves to have always a Conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards Men*: And let us never do any thing whereby we shall offer violence to the light of our minds. God hath given us this Principle to be our constant guide, and companion; and whoever, after due care to inform himself aright, does sincerely follow the dictate and direction of this Guide, shall never fatally miscarry: But whoever goes against the clear dictate and conviction of his Conscience, in so doing he undermines the foundation of his own comfort and peace, and sins against God and his own Soul.

And to the end we may keep our Consciences clear of guilt, we should frequently examine our selves, and look back upon the actions of our lives, and call our selves to a strict account for them; that wherein soever we have fail'd

of innocency, we may make it up by repentance; and may get our Consciences clear'd of guilt by pardon and forgiveness: And if we do not do this, we cannot with confidence rely upon the testimony of our Consciences; because many great Sins may slip out of our memories without a particular repentance for them, which yet do require and stand in need of a particular repentance.

Especially, we should search our Consciences more narrowly at these more solemn Times of Repentance, and when we are preparing our selves to receive the Holy Sacrament: And if at these Times our hearts do accuse and condemn us for any thing, we should not only heartily lament and bewail it before God, but sincerely resolve by God's Grace to reform in that particular, and from that time to break off that Sin which we have then repented of, and have ask'd forgiveness of God for: For if after we have repented of it, we return to it again, we wound our Consciences afresh, and involve them in a new guilt.

In the last place, We should reverence our Consciences, and stand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their testimony and verdict: For Conscience is a Domestick Judge, and a kind of familiar God: And therefore, next to the Supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth, every man should be afraid to offend his own Reason and Conscience, which whenever we knowingly do amiss, will beat us with many stripes, and handle us more severely than the greatest Enemy we have in the World: So that next to the dreadful Sentence of the great Day, every man hath reason to dread the Sentence of his own Conscience. *God indeed is greater then our hearts, and knows all things*; but under Him we have the greatest reason to fear the judgment of our own Consciences: For nothing but that can give us Comfort, and nothing can create so much trouble and disquiet to us.

And though the judgment of our Consciences be not always the judgment of God, yet we have great reason to have great regard to it; and that upon several Accounts, which I shall but briefly mention, and so conclude.

*First*, Because the judgment of our Conscience is free from any compulsion. No body can force it from us, whether we will or no; and make us to pass sentence against our selves, whether we see reason for it or not.

*Secondly*, The sentence of our own Consciences is very likely to be impartial, at least not too hard on the severe side; because men naturally love themselves, and are too apt to be favourable in their own case: All the World cannot bribe a man against himself: There is no man whose mind is not either distemper'd by melancholy, or deluded by false Principles, that is apt to be credulous against himself, and his own interest and peace.

*Thirdly*, The judgment which our Conscience passeth upon our own Actions, is upon the most intimate and certain knowledge of them, and of their true motives and ends. We may easily be deceiv'd in our judgment of the Actions of other men, and may think them to be much better or worse than in truth they are: Because we cannot certainly tell with what mind they were done, and what circumstances there may be to excuse or aggravate them; how strong the temptation was, or how weak the judgment of him that was seduc'd by it into errour and folly.

But we are conscious to all the secret springs, and motives, and circumstances of our own actions: We can descend into our own hearts, and dive to the bottom of them, and search into the most retired corners of our intentions and ends; which none, besides our selves, but only God can do; for excepting *Him* only, *none knows the things of a man but the spirit of a man which is in him.*

*Fourthly*,

*Fourthly*, The Sentence of our Conſcience is peremptory and inexorable, and there is no way to avoid it. Thou maiſt poſſibly fly from the wrath of other men to the uttermoſt parts of the Earth, but thou canſt not ſtir one ſtep from thy ſelf: In vain ſhalt thou call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on thee and hide thee from the ſight of thine own Conſcience.

Wretched and miſerable man! when thou haſt offended and wounded thy Conſcience: For whither canſt thou go, to eſcape the eye of this Witneſs, the terror of this Judge, the torment of this Executioner? A man may as ſoon get rid of himſelf, and quit his own being, as fly from the ſharp Accuſations and ſtinging Guilt of his own Conſcience; which will perpetually haunt him, till it be done away by repentance and forgiveneſs.

We account it a fearful thing to be haunted by evil Spirits, and yet the Spirit of a man which is in him, throughly affrighted with its own Guilt may be a more ghaſtly and amazing Spectacle than all the Devils in Hell: There is no ſuch frightful Apparition in the World, as a man's own guilty and terrible Conſcience ſtaring him in the face: *A ſpirit* that is thus *wounded, who can bear?*

To conclude; Let theſe conſiderations prevail with us always to live, not with regard to the opinion of others, which may be grounded upon miſtake, or may not indeed be their opinion, but their flattery; but with regard to the judgment of our own Conſcience, which though it may ſometimes be miſtaken, can never be brib'd and corrupted: We may be hypocrites to others and baſe flatterers, but our Conſciences whenever they are throughly awaken'd are always ſincere, and deal truly with us, and ſpeak to us as they think.

Therefore whatever we ſay or do, let it be ſincere: For though hypocriſie may for a while preſerve our eſteem and reputation with others, yet it can ſigniſie nothing to the peace of our own minds: And then what will it avial us to conceal any thing from other men, when we can hide nothing that we ſay or do from our own Conſciences?

The Sum of all is this: If we would keep a Conſcience void of offence, let us always be calm and conſiderate, and have the patience to examine things throughly and impartially: Let us be humble and willing to learn, and never too proud and ſtiff to be better inform'd: Let us do what we can to free our ſelves from prejudice and paſſion, from ſelf conceit and ſelf-intereſt, which are often too ſtrong a byaſs upon the judgments of the beſt men, as we may ſee every day in very ſad and melancholy inſtances: And having taken all due care to inform our Conſciencei aright, let us follow the judgment of our minds in what we do; and then we have done what we can to pleaſe God.

And if we would always take this care to keep a good Conſcience, we ſhould always be eaſie, and good company to our ſelves: But if we offend our Conſciences, by doing contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we make the unhappieſt breach in the World; we ſtir up a quarrel in our own breaſts, and arm our own minds againſt our ſelves; we create an enemy to our ſelves in our own boſoms, and fall out with the beſt and moſt inſeparable Companion of our lives.

And on the contrary, *a good Conſcience* will be *a continual Feaſt*, and will give us that comfort and courage in an evil day which nothing elſe can: And then whatever happen to us, we may *commit our ſouls to God in well-doing, as into the hands of a faithful Creatour*, To whom with our *Bleſſed Saviour* and *Redeemer*, and the *Holy Ghoſt* the *Comforter*, be all honour and glory, now and ever. *Amen.*

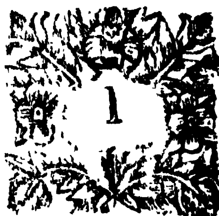
# SERMON XXXIX.

## *How to keep a truly Religious Fast.*

Preached before the Queen at *WHITEHALL*, *September the* 16th, 1691.

### ZECH. VII. 5.

*Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years,* DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?



IN the beginning of this *Chapter* the People of the *Jews*, who were then rebuilding the Temple at *Jerusalem*, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finish'd till about two years after, send to the *Priests* and the *Prophets*, to enquire of them, whether they should still continue the *Fast* of the *fifth* Month, which they had begun in *Babylon* and continued to observe during the seventy Years of their Captivity, in a sad remembrance of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*; or should not now rather turn it into a Day of Feasting and Gladness?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an Answer in this, and the following *Chapter*. And first he expostulates with them concerning those their monthly Fasts, whether they did indeed deserve that name, and were not rather a mere shew and pretence of a Religious Fast, *vers.* 4, 5, *Then came the word of the Lord of Hosts unto me, saying; Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* The enquiry was particularly concerning the *Fast* of the *fifth* Month, because the occasion of that was more considerable than of all the other; but the Answer of God mentions the *Fasts* of the *fifth* and *seventh* Months, these two being probably observ'd with greater solemnity than the other.

But for our clearer understanding of this, it will be requisite to consider the original and occasion of all their *Monthly Fasts*: which as appears from other places of Scripture, in short, was this: When the *Jews* were carried away Captive into *Babylon*, in a deep sense of this great Judgment of God up-

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on them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed *four annual Fasts*, which they observed during their seventy years Captivity, *viz.* the *Fast* of the *fourth* Month, in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through the Wall of *Jerusalem*, which we find mention'd, *Jer.* 52. 6, 7. The *Fast* of the *fifth* Month, in memory of the destruction of the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*, verses 12, 13. The *Fast* of the *seventh* Month, in remembrance of the slaying of *Gedaliah*, upon which followed the dispersion of the *Jews*, of which we have an account, *Jer.* 41. 1, 2. And the *Fast* of the *tenth* Month, in memory of the beginning of the Siege of *Jerusalem*, of which we find mention, 2 *Kings* 25. 1.

In this order we find these *four* Annual Fasts mention'd, *Zechar.* 8 19. not according to the order of the Events, but of the Months of the several Years in which these events happened: And there likewise God gives a full Answer to this Enquiry concerning the continuance of these *annual Fasts*, namely, That they should for the future be turned into solemn Days of Joy and Gladness.

Zech. 8. 18, 19. *And the word of the Lord of Hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the Fast of the fourth Month, and the Fast of the fifth, and the Fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the House of* Judah *joy and gladness, and chearful Feasts.*

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* that is, did these *Fasts* truly serve to any Religious end and purpose? Did not the People content themselves with a mere external shew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not still go on in their sins; nay, and add to them upon these Occasions, fasting for strife and debate and oppression? In a word, were they not worse rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them, as it follows in this *Chapter*; *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts,*

Verse 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *saying; Execute judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widows nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine mischief against his brother in your heart: But they refused to hearken, and pull'd away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear; yea, they made their heart as an Adamant-stone, lest they should hear the Law and the words which the Lord of Hosts hath sent by his spirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hosts: Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

So that notwithstanding these outward Solemnities of Fasting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Fast; *did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* They were sensible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their sins, but persisted still in their obstinacy and disobedience.

And what God here by the Prophet *Zachary* calls *fasting unto Him, even unto him*, the Prophet *Isaiah* calls the *Fast which God hath chosen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a Fast as I have chosen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a Fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily: Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer*, &c.

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From all which passages we may easily understand wherein these *Monthly Fasts* of the *Jews* were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expostulates so severely in the *Text: When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh Month, even these seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?* In the general, the fault which God finds with them was this, that these Solemnities did not serve any real end and purpose of Religion, but fail'd in their main design, which was a sincere repentance and reformation of their lives: For which reason he tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor esteem'd by him as perform'd *unto Him*, because they did not answer the true intention and design of them.

My work at this time shall be, *First*, to consider in general what it is to *fast* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to our selves, I shall consider more particularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I shall consider in general what it is to *fast unto God*, that is, to keep a truly Religious Fast. And of this I shall give an account in the following particulars. *First*, a truly Religious Fast consists in the afflicting of our Bodies by a strict abstinence, that so they may be fit and proper instruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confession of our Sins to God with shame and confusion of face, and with a hearty contrition and sorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earnest deprecation of God's displeasure, and humble supplications to Him that He would avert his Judgments and turn away his Anger from us. *Fourthly*, in Intercession with God for such spiritual and temporal Blessings upon our selves and others as are needful and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the Poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention these particulars, that I may more largely insist upon that which I mainly intended, and proposed to consider in the next place, namely,

II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majesties* for a solemn Humiliation and Repentance thro'out the Nation, doth require at our hands. II. And this I shall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *First*, that we should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we should likewise heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us. *Thirdly*, we should most importunately deprecate those terrible Judgments of God to which these our great and crying Sins have so justly exposed us. *Fourthly*, we should pour out our earnest Prayers and Supplications to Almighty God for the preservation of their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the establishment and prosperity of their Government, and for the good success of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Fasting and Prayers should be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Lastly*, we should prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of these I shall, by God's Assistance, speak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and so as every one of us may understand what God requires of him upon so solemn an Occasion as this.

*First*, We should humble our selves before God every one for his own personal Sins and Miscarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increased the Publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Ven-

geance of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance ſhould begin with our ſelves and our own Sins, becauſe Repentance is always deſigned to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular Perſons which do conſtitute and make up the generality.

And this *Solomon* preſcribes as the true Method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admirable Prayer of his at the Dedication of the Temple: *If there be*, ſays he, *in the Land famine; if there be peſtilence, blaſting, mildew, locuſt, or if there be caterpillar; or if their Enemy beſiege them in the Land of their Cities: Whatever plague, whatever ſickneſs there be; what prayer or ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy People* Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART, *and ſpread forth his hands towards this Houſe: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his way, whoſe heart thou knoweſt, for thou even thou only, knoweſt the hearts of all the children of men; that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the Land which thou gaveſt to their Fathers.*

1 Kings 8. 37, 38, 39, 40.

You ſee here that in caſe of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation muſt begin with particular Perſons: *What prayer or ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy People* Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: *Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular perſons muſt be convinced of their perſonal Sins and Tranſgreſſions, before God will hear the Prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And becauſe we cannot perform this part of confeſſing and bewailing our own perſonal Sins, and of teſtifying our particular Repentance for them, in the publick Congregation, any otherwiſe than by joyning with them in a general Humiliation and Repentance; therefore we ſhould do well, on the Day before the publick Faſt, or at leaſt the Morning before we go to the publick Aſſembly, to humble our ſelves before God in our Families, and eſpecially in our Cloſets; confeſſing to Him, with great ſhame and ſorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the ſeveral Aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of againſt the Divine Majeſty, ſo far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earneſtly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveneſs of them, for his Mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*.

And ſo likewiſe, after we return from the Church, we ſhould retire again into our Cloſets, and there renew our Repentance, with moſt ſerious and ſincere Reſolutions of reforming in all thoſe particulars which we have confeſſed and repented of. And if we would have our Reſolutions to come to any good, we muſt make them as diſtinct and particular as we can; and charge it upon our ſelves, as to ſuch and ſuch Sins, for which we have declared our ſorrow and repentance, that we will amend and do better for the future.

And we ſhould endeavour alſo, to fortifie theſe good Reſolutions, in the beſt manner we can by ſerious conſideration and by ſolemn promiſes of better obedience, and of a more conſcientious Care of our Lives and all our Actions for the future: And then, with the greateſt earneſtneſs and importunity, we ſhould implore the Aſſiſtance of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to this purpoſe.

By this means the great End of a ſolemn Faſt and Humiliation will be in ſome good Meaſure attain'd, and not wholly defeated, as for the moſt part it is by being hudled up and loſt in a confuſed and general Repentance, which, commonly ends together with the publick Aſſembly, without any real and permanent

permanent Effect upon particular Persons: Perhaps a great part of the Congregation may have been in some degree sorry for their sins; but after all no man forsakes them, nor is the better for his sorrow, but leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries home with him the same Affection for his Sins which he had before, and a secret Resolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the *Jews*. They had their solemn monthly Fast, in which they made great a shew of Humiliation, *hanging down their heads like a bulrush for a day, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under them*: But there was no inward change of their minds, no real Reformation of their Lives; and assoon as ever the publick Solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil Course. So God complains of them: *I hearkned*, says He, *and I heard, but they spake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done? but they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel.* Jer. 8. 6. *They spake not aright*, that is, they did not take the right Method for an effectual Repentance: They humbled themselves indeed before God, and repented at random for the Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the Community: But all this while, they never reflected upon themselves in particular; they had no sense, no conviction of their own personal faults and miscarriages, without which there can be no true general Repentance: *No man repented of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?*

And as they had no sense of their own particular Sins which they had been guilty of, so they had no thought of leaving them; but assoon as ever the publick Fasting and Humiliation was over, they return'd to them again with the same eager and furious Appetite; *they turned every one to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battel*, that is, without any consideration, or sense of danger.

*Secondly*, We should likewise upon this *Day*, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; especially the great and crying Sins of the Nation committed by all Ranks and Orders of Men amongst us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been so justly incensed against us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the Sins of others, as well as for their own; to mourn for them in secret, as the Prophet *Jeremy* does for the obstinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*, and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which their Sins were ready to bring down upon them: *But if ye will not return*, says he to that obdurate People, *my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride*, or obstinacy; *and mine eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's Flock is carried away captive.* Jer. 13. 17. And indeed almost the whole Prophecy of *Jeremy*, and his Book of *Lamentations*, are little else but a perpetual Humiliation and Mourning for the Sins of that People, and for the judgments of God which he saw already inflicted, or foresaw to be coming upon them.

We read likewise of *Lot*, when he dwelt in *Sodom*, how *he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man*, saith St. *Peter*, *dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.*

Holy *David* also, upon all occasions, testifies his great trouble and grief for the Sins which he saw committed by others, and was so affected with them that he trembled at the very thought of them: *Rivers of tears*, says he, *run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy Law:* Psal. 119. 136. And in the same *Psalm*, *Horrour hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked which forsake thy* v. 53.

*Law:* And again, *I beheld the transgressors and was grieved, because they*
v. 158. *kept not thy Word.*

And how does *Daniel* humble himself before God and mourn, and in the Name of all the People, and of all Degrees and Orders of men among them, take shame to himself and them, for the great Sins which they had been guilty of? *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly,*
Dan. 9. 5, 7, 8. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day: To our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.*

With what trouble and confusion does *Ezra*, upon a solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the Sins of the People? *O my*
Ezra 9. 6, 7. *God,* says he, *I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God: For our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses grown up unto the Heavens: Since the days of our Fathers, we have been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our Kings and our Priests, been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands,* &c.

And thus also ought we, the People of this sinful Land, upon this solemn Day of Fasting and Humiliation, to set our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous Aggravations; and in the bitterness of our souls to lament and bewail that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath over spread the Nation, and diffused it self thro' all Ranks and Degrees of Men, *Magistrates, Ministers* and People. I shall speak something more particularly concerning each of these.

1. The Sins of the *Magistrates* and those that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to see to the execution of them, ought to be strict observers of them themselves. For it must needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be severe upon those faults in others of which he knows himself to be notoriously guilty. And yet how many are there, whose place and duty it is to correct the Vices and Immoralities of others, who are far from being Examples of Virtue themselves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is so lame and unequal a distribution of Justice in the Nation, and that Magistrates are so cold and slack in the discountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholesome Laws made against them in execution: As against the profanation of the Lord's Day, by secular business, by vain sports and pastimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to dissolve the minds of men into mirth and pleasure, and to carry them off from all serious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the Meditations of another World; and to give the Devil an advantage, and an opportunity which he never fails to take, to steal *the good seed*, the Word of God, which they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none effect: And which is yet worse, by lewd and sinful practices, which are unlawful, at any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach and violation of God's Law.

And likewise by neglecting to put in execution the Laws against profane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, for which the Land mourns; and against *Drunkenness*, and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are so common, and so impudently committed amongst us: Whether they be Civil, or Ecclesiastical Laws; and it is hard to say which of them are most remissly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to prosecute that horrible Sin of *Murther*, so frequently now committed in our Streets beyond the example of former Ages, with that severity and impartiality which is necessary to free the Nation from the guilt of that crying Sin, which calls so loud to Heaven for Vengeance.

And

And all this, notwithſtanding the Magiſtrates are under the Oath of God to put the Laws in due execution againſt all theſe Crimes, ſo far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cogniſance.

2. The Sins of the *Miniſters*, who ſerve at God's Altar, and watch over the Souls of men, whoſe blood will be required at their hands, if any of them periſh through their fault and neglect. There is no reaſon to doubt, but that there are a good number of faithful Shepherds in the Land, who watch over their Flocks with great care and conſcience, remembring the dreadful Account which they muſt one Day make to *Him who ſhall judge the quick and dead*, of the Souls committed to their charge.

But yet how groſly do many of us fail of the faithful diſcharge of the ſubſtantial parts of this high Office? wanting a juſt ſenſe of the ineſtimable worth and value of the Souls of men for whom Chriſt died; taking little or no care to inſtruct them in the good knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the way to eternal happineſs by an exemplary converſation.

Nay too many among us demean themſelves ſo ſcandalouſly, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives ſo directly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhor the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed Converſations: Hereby expoſing them to the Craft of Seducers, and rendring them an eaſie prey to the *Emiſſaries* of the Church of *Rome*, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better ſhew of a ſtrict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe thoſe Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themſelves and their own Doctrines? When all is ſaid, the life and manners of the Preacher are the beſt eloquence, and have that dint and power of perſwaſion in them, which no words, no art can equal. Whoſo lives as he ſpeaks, does, as it is ſaid of our Bleſſed *Saviour, Speaks as one that hath authority, and not as the Scribes: Not as the Scribes*; whoſe words, notwithſtanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, becauſe, as our *Saviour* tells us of them, *they ſaid, but did not*; their Lives were not anſwerable to their Doctrines: Whereas our Bleſſed Saviour therefore *ſpoke as never man ſpake*, becauſe he liv'd as never man liv'd; ſo innocent, ſo uſeful, ſo exemplary a life: He *was holy, harmleſs, and undefil'd*: He *did no ſin, neither was guile found in his lips:* He *fulfilled all righteouſneſs, and went about doing good.* This was that which made him ſo powerful *a Preacher of Righteouſneſs*; and we muſt neceſſarily fall ſo much ſhort of *Him* in the authority and efficacy of our *Sermons*, as we do in the holineſs and goodneſs of our *Lives*. Such a Preacher, and ſuch a practice as that of our Bleſſed *Saviour* was, is every way fitted to reprove, and perſwade, and reform Mankind.

We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the Teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blaſphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by thoſe, who, above all others, are moſt nearly concern'd to preſerve and ſupport the credit and honor of it.

And we cannot but ſee, how our Religion and Church are beſet and endanger'd on every ſide; by the rude aſſaults of Infidelity, and by the cunning Arts of ſeducing Spirits, and by our own inteſtine Heats and Diviſions: And it can never be ſufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of blood, that we whoſe particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of Men in a holy Faith, and in the reſolution of a good Life, ſhould, for want

want of due inſtruction, and by the diſſolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needleſs Differences about leſſer things, have ſo great a hand in pulling down Religion, and in betraying the Souls of Men either to downright Infidelity, or to a careleſs neglect and profane contempt of all Religion.

May not God juſtly expoſtulate this matter with us, as he did of old with
Jer. 5. 30, 31. the People of the *Jews?* *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the Land; the Prophets propheſie falſly, and the Prieſts bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it ſo; and what will ye do in the end thereof?* When they who are the Paſtors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that paſs, that the generality of the People ſit down contented with the worſt ſtate of things, and are become almoſt indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of theſe things be, but that *the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?*

If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it muſt begin at the Houſe of God; and they who are the Miniſters of Religion muſt lead on this work, and be more careful and conſcientious in the diſcharge of that high and holy Office which is committed to them by *the Great Shepherd and Biſhop of Souls.* Elſe, what ſhall we ſay when God ſhall challenge us, as he
Jer. 13. 20, 21. once did the Paſtors of the *Jewiſh* Church, by his Prophet, ſaying, *Where is the Flock that was given thee, thy beautiful Flock? What wilt thou ſay when he ſhall puniſh thee?*

3. The Sins of the *People*; amongſt whom there is almoſt an univerſal corruption and depravation of Manners; inſomuch that Impiety and Vice ſeem to have over-ſpread the face of the Nation; ſo that we may take up that ſad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of *Iſrael*, and ap-
Iſa. 1. 4, 5. ply it to our ſelves; that we *are a ſinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil-doers*; that *the whole head is ſick, and the whole heart faint*; and that *from the ſole of the foot even to the head, there is no ſoundneſs in us, but wounds, and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.*

We may juſtly ſtand amaz'd to conſider, how *the God of all patience* is provok'd by us every day; to think how long he hath born with us and *ſuffered our manners*; our open Profaneneſs, and Infidelity; our great Immoralies, and groſs Hypocriſie; our inſolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-favour'd counterfeiting of it for low and ſordid ends: And, which is the moſt melancholy conſideration of all the reſt, we ſeem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongſt to ſave us.

And then if we conſider further our moſt uncharitable and unchriſtian Diviſions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation: Our incorrigibleneſs under the Judgments of God which we have ſeen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very ſevere and terrible manner been inflicted upon theſe Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants thereof might learn righteouſneſs:* Our inſenſibleneſs of the Hand of God, ſo viſible in his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time He hath wrought for us.

And laſtly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewiſe whom He hath ſo ſignally honour'd in making them the happy Means and Inſtruments of our Deliverance: And this, not only expreſs'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a moſt unnatural Conſpiracy againſt Them with the greateſt E-

nemies,

nemies, not only to the Peace of the Nation, but likewise to the Reformed Religion therein profess'd and by Law established; and to the interest of it all the World over.

So that we may say with *Ezra*, *And now, O our God, what shall we say unto thee after this?* And may not God likewise say to us, as He did more than once to the *Jews*? *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* Ezra 9. 6.

*Thirdly*, We should likewise upon this Day, earnestly deprecate God's displeasure, and make our humble Supplications to Him, that He would be graciously pleas'd to avert those terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have just cause to fear may fall upon us; and that he would be entreated by us at last to be appeas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceness of his Anger.

This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their Solemn Days of Fasting and Prayer; and this God expresly enjoyns: *Blow the Trumpet in* Zion, *sanctifie a Fast, call a solemn Assembly; gather the People, sanctifie the Congregation, assemble the Elders*, &c. *Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the People, Where is their God?* Joel 2. 15, 16, 17.

And to this earnest deprecation of his Judgments, God promiseth a gracious answer; for so it immediately follows: *Then will the Lord be jealous for his Land, and pity his People.* Vers. 18.

And thus likewise *Daniel*, when he set his face *to seek the Lord God, by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes*, does in a most humble and earnest manner deprecate the displeasure of God towards his People, and beg of Him to remove his Judgments, and to turn away his Anger from them, *O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy City* Jerusalem, *thy Holy Mountain: Because for our sins, and for the iniquity of our Fathers,* Jerusalem *and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy servant and his supplication; and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the City which is called by thy Name: For we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own sake, O my God; for thy City and thy People are called by thy Name.* Dan. 9. 3. Vers. 16, 17, 18, 19.

And thus also should We, upon this Solemn Occasion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greatest importunity deprecate those terrible Judgments which we so righteously have deserv'd, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have so justly exposed us: Humbly beseeching Him, not for our Righteousness, but for his great Mercy; for his own Name's sake, and because we are his People, and are called by his Name, and because his Holy Truth and Religion are profess'd amongst us; that He would be pleas'd to hear the Prayers of his Servants and their Supplications which they have made before him this Day, *for the Lord's sake.*

*Fourthly*, We should likewise upon this Day, pour out our most earnest Supplications to Almighty God, for the preservation of Their *Majesties* Sacred Persons, and for the prosperity and establishment of Their Government, and for the good Success of Their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more especially, since His *Majesty*, with so many Confederate Princes and States of *Europe*, is engaged in so necessary an Undertaking for the

Common good of *Christendom*, and for the mutual preservation and recovery of Their respective Rights: We should earnestly implore the favour and assistance of Almighty God in so just and glorious a Cause, against the common Invader and Oppressor of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And that of his infinite Goodness He would be graciously pleased to take the Person of our *Sovereign Lord* the *King* into the particular care and protection of his Providence: That He would secure his precious Life from all secret Attempts, and from open Violence: That he would give his Angels charge over him, and cover his Head in the day of Battle, and crown it with Victory over his Enemies, and restore him to us again in safety.

And that he would likewise preserve and direct the *Queen's Majesty*, in whose hands the Administration of the Government is at present so happily plac'd: That He would give Her Wisdom and Resolution for such a Time as this, and support and carry Her through all the Difficulties of it.

And Lastly, That He would bless them Both with a long Life, and a peaceful and happy Reign over us; that *under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.*

*Fifthly*, Our Fasting and Humiliation should be accompanied with our Alms and Charity to the poor and needy: And we should every one of us, according to the counsel given by the Prophet to King *Nebuchadnezzar*, *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthning of our tranquility:* Hereby intimating, that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquility and happiness of Prince and People, a sincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in necessity and distress, are most likely to prevail with God, not only to respite the ruine of a sinful People, but to incline Him to thoughts of Peace towards them: For so he promiseth to the *Jews* upon their sincere Repentance, and earnest Supplication to Him, which are always accompanied with Charity to the Poor: *For I know the thoughts which I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end: Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

Dan. 4. 27.

Jer. 29. 11, 12, 13.

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation, and of our pious Princes, who are so ready to every good Work, and such bright and shining Examples in this kind, more than once so seasonably extended to the relief of our distressed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Persecutors: I say, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite Mercy and Goodness of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible Calamities which were just ready to rush in upon us. And what cause have we to thank God, who hath allotted to us this more blessed and merciful part, to *give* and not to *receive*; and to be free from Persecution our selves, that so we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were persecuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the Poor is a great Security to us in times of evil: So *David* assures us, speaking of the *Righteous* or *Charitable* Man; *He shall not*, says he, *be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of Dearth he shall be satisfied,*

And so likewise in Times of publick Distress, when we are beset with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our side, would swallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation hath many times prov'd its best safeguard and shield: *It shall fight for thee,* saith the Son of *Sirach*, speaking of the

Charity

Charity or Alms, *against thine Enemy, more than a mighty shield and strong spear.*

And of this, as I said before, I doubt not but we of this Nation, by the great Mercy and Goodness of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the best and bravest of Princes; to whom by too many among us, the most unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many desperate hazards to which he hath exposed himself for our sakes, that ever were made to so great and generous a Benefactor: To so great a Benefactor I say, not only to these Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in asserting and maintaining their Liberties against the insolent pride and unjust encroachments of one of the greatest Oppressors the World hath known for many Ages: Of whom it may be said as *Job* doth of the *Leviathan*, *Upon the earth there is not his like:* I am glad I cannot apply what immediately follows, That *he is made without fear*; but surely the next words are apposite enough, *He beholdeth all high things, and is king over all the children of pride:* And yet *He that is higher than the highest, even He that sitteth in the Heavens doth laugh at him, for He seeth that his day is coming.* Job 41. 33, 34.

To conclude this *Particular*: If we would have our Prayers ascend up to Heaven, and find acceptance there, our Alms must go along with them: So the *Angel* intimates when he says to *Cornelius*, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are come up for a memorial before God:* Thy *Prayers* and thine *Alms*; they must go together if we desire that our Prayers should be effectual. And the Prophet *Isaiah*, speaking of the *Fast which God hath chosen*, and which is *acceptable* to Him, makes Charity and Alms a most essential part of it: *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.* Acts 10. 4. Isa. 58. 7, 9.

*Sixthly* and *Lastly*, We should Prosecute our Repentance and good Resolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our Lives. For in *this* Repentance doth mainly consist: This is the proper fruit and effect of all our Humiliation and good Resolutions, to forsake our sins, and to become better for the future; more pious and devout towards God, more sober and chast with regard to our selves, more just and charitable, more humble and meek towards all men: In a word, more innocent, more useful, and more *holy in all manner of conversation*.

And without this, all our Fasting and Humiliation, our most earnest Prayers and Supplications, will signifie nothing: All our Sorrow and Tears will be but as water spilt upon the ground, and will not turn to any account either to save our own Souls, or to preserve *this untoward Generation, this crooked and perverse Nation*, from ruin and destruction. So God tells *Solomon*, that this is the only way to appease and reconcile Him to a sinful People: *If my People which is called by my Name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: Then will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their sin, and heal their Land.* 2 Chron. 7. 14.

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this Day, to *turn us from our wicked ways*, God would then turn away his anger from us; and, as he promised to the *Jews* by the Prophet *Zachary*, He would turn these our monthly Fasts *into joy, and gladness, and cheerful feasts*; as he hath in a great measure already done, *Blessed be his great and glorious Name.* Zech. 8. 19.

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that God should deliver us from the hands of our Enemies, that we may sin against Him without fear

all the days of our Lives? To what Purpose should the Providence of God take so much care to preserve our Religion to us, when we make no better use of it for the direction and government of our Lives? When it serves most of us only to talk of it; and too many amongst us, to talk against it; to deride it, and despitefully to use it. If this be the truth of our Case, what can we say, why the Kingdom of God should not be taken from us and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can we say, why our Candlestick should not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Gospel of *Christ* which we have so long enjoyed, and so long rebelled against should not be utterly extinguish'd amongst us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to these good Resolutions, and to make them good: If you will not be perswaded to practise, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we say: Hear our words at least, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would do, when they were at the worst: So
Ezek. 33. 31. God tells the *Prophet* concerning them: *They come unto thee, as the People cometh; and they sit before thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.*

I had much rather at any time have occasion to praise than to reprove, especially in this great Assembly: And yet it is not to be dissembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place is frequently so careless and irreverent, as is very misbecoming those who are in the more peculiar Presence of the Great and glorious *Majesty of Heaven and Earth*, and profess at that very time to worship Him.

I am sure, we have a better Pattern perpetually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a most serious and steddy attention, without wandring, without diversion, and without drowsiness: such an Example as I cannot but hope will in a short time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and silent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our selves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worship and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would consider what is said; and consideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpose of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our interest to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with a resolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earnestly to repent us of our sins past, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God*, in whose presence we have humbled our selves this Day; and to *turn to Him that hath smitten us*, lest we provoke him *to punish us yet seven times more*, and after that *seven times more for our sins*, and for our impenitency in them, till at last *He make our plagues wonderful.*

To conclude; Let us every one, with that true Penitent in *Job*, take words to our selves, and say, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more; that which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh! that there were such a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever.*

Which God of his infinite Goodness grant, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ:* To whom with thee, O *Father* and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON

# SERMON XL.

## *That God is the only Happiness of Man.*

## Preached before the Queen at *WHITEHALL*, *March* the 20th, 169½.

### PSALM LXXIII. 25.

*Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee.*



THE Design of this *Psalm* is to vindicate the Goodness and Justice of the Divine Providence, notwithstanding the prosperous state of the wicked and the afflicted condition of good men many times in this World. And in the first place, the *Psalmist*, whoever he was, whether *David* or *Asaph*, lays down this for a most certain Truth that God is good to good men: *Of a truth God is good to* Ver. 1.
Israel, *to such as are of a clean heart.*

And yet for all this he tells us, that at some times he was under no small temptation to question the truth of this *Principle*, when he beheld the promiscuous dispensation of things here below; that the wicked are often prosperous, and good men exposed to great calamities in this life; as if God either neglected humane affairs, or had a greater kindness for the Workers of Iniquity, than for Pious and Good Men: *As for me, my foot had well* Ver. 2
*nigh slipp'd, for I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

This, he says, was a very great stumbling block to good men, and tempted them to doubt of the Providence of God: *Therefore his People return hi-* Ver. 10.
*ther, and waters of a full cup are wrung out of them; and they say, Doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most High?* This Sentence is somewhat obscurely rendred in our *Translation*, so as to make the sense of it difficult; which is plainly this: *Therefore his People return hither*; that is, therefore good men come to this, in the greatness of their affliction, and in the bitterness of their soul, to question God's knowledge and care of humane affairs.

Ver. 12. *Behold*, ſay they, *theſe are the ungodly, and yet they are the proſperous in the world, they increaſe in riches:* To what purpoſe then is it for any man to
Ver. 13. be Religious and Virtuous? *Verily, I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency:* In vain have I endeavoured after purity of heart and innocency of life, ſince ſo little good comes of it; nay, ſo far from that, that I have been in continual trouble and affliction: *All the day long have I*
Ver. 14. *been plagued, and chaſtned every morning.*

Such thoughts as theſe often came into his mind, and gave him great trouble and diſquiet: But he preſently corrects himſelf: *If I ſay I will ſpeak*
Ver. 15. *thus, I ſhould offend againſt the generation of thy Children*; that is, I ſhould go againſt the ſenſe of all pious and good men, who have always believed the Providence of God notwithſtanding this Objection: Which at laſt he tells us he had raiſed on purpoſe to try if he could find the ſolution of it:
Ver. 16. *I thought to know this, which was grievous in mine eyes:* And then he reſolves all into the unſearchable Wiſdom of the Divine Providence, which if we fully underſtood from firſt to laſt, we ſhould ſee good reaſon to be ſatisfied with the equity of it: *When I go into the Sanctuary of God, then ſhall I un-*
Ver. 17, 18. *derſtand the end of theſe men: How thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places*, &c. This ſatiſfied him, that whenever the ſecret deſign of God's Providnce ſhould be unfolded, whether in this World or the other, how ſtrange and croſs ſoever things might ſeem to be at preſent, yet in the iſſue and concluſion it would appear, that neither are bad Men ſo happy, nor good Men ſo miſerable, as at preſent they may ſeem to be.

So that upon a full debate of this matter, the *Pſalmiſt* concludes, that theſe Objections againſt Providence do ſpring from our ignorance, and ſhort and imperfect view of things; whereas if we ſaw the whole deſign from beginning to end, it would appear to be very reaſonable and regular. *Thus my*
Ver. 21. *heart was grieved; ſo fooliſh was I and ignorant, and as a Beaſt before thee.* And in regard to himſelf, he tells us, that he ſaw great reaſon to acknowledge God's tender care over him in particular, and that he could find no
Ver. 23. ſecurity or comfort for himſelf, but in God alone: *Nevertheleſs I am continually with thee; thou haſt holden me by thy right hand: Thou ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterwards receive me to glory*; as if he had ſaid, I am ſenſible of thy conſtant preſence with me, and care of me; and do entirely depend upon thy guidance and direction, not doubting but that my preſent troubles and afflictions will have a happy and glorious iſſue.

And at laſt he breaks out into a kind of exultation and triumph for the mighty conſolation which he found in the firm belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God, as the great ſtay and ſupport of his Soul in the worſt condition that could befal him; in the words of the *Text, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.* If a man were to chuſe a happineſs for himſelf, and were to ranſack Heaven and Earth for it, after all his ſearch and enquiry he would at laſt fix upon God as the chief happineſs of man, and the true and only reſt and center of our Souls. This then is the plain meaning of the *Text, That nothing in the world but God can make man happy: Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

That Man of himſelf is not ſufficient for his own happineſs, is evident upon many accounts: Becauſe he is liable to ſo[illegible] evils and calamities, which he can neither prevent, nor remedy: He [illegible] of [illegible]ts which he can't ſupply; compaſſed about with infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redreſs: He is obnoxious to dangers which he muſt always fear, becauſe he can never ſufficiently provide againſt them.

Conſider

Conſider Man by himſelf, and from under the conduct and protection of a ſuperiour and more powerful Being, and he is in a moſt diſconſolate and forlorn condition: Secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be diſappointed of every thing that he hopes for: He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the juſteſt cauſe of his grief is that he cannot help it; for if he could, inſtead of grieving for it, he would help it: He cannot refrain from deſiring a great many things which he would fain have, but is never likely to obtain, becauſe they are out of his power; and it troubles him both that they are ſo, and that he cannot help his being troubled at it.

*Thus man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain*; courting happineſs in a thouſand ſhapes, and the faſter he follows it, the ſwifter it flies from him. Almoſt every thing promiſeth happineſs to us at a diſtance, ſuch a ſtep of Honour, ſuch a pitch of Eſtate, ſuch a Fortune or Match for a Child: But when we come nearer to it, either we fall ſhort of it, or it falls ſhort of our expectation; and it is hard to ſay which of theſe is the greateſt diſappointment. Our hopes are uſually bigger than enjoyment can ſatisfie, and an evil long fear'd, beſides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troubleſome than the evil it ſelf when it comes.

*In a word, man is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards.* He comes into the World naked and unarm'd, and from himſelf more deſtitute of the natural means of his ſecurity and ſupport than any other Creature whatſoever, as it were on purpoſe to ſhew that he is more peculiarly the care of a ſuperiour Providence: And as man, of all the Creatures of this lower World, is only made to own and acknowledge a Deity; ſo God in great Wiſdom hath ſo order'd things, that none of the other Creatures ſhould have ſo much need of Him, and ſo much reaſon to acknowledge their neceſſary dependance upon him. So that the words of *David* are the very ſenſe and voice of Nature, declaring to us that Mankind is born into the World upon terms of greater dependance upon the Providence of God than other Creatures: *Thou art he*, Pſal. 22. 9,
ſays *David* there to God, *that tookeſt me out of the womb, thou madeſt me to* 10, 11.
*hope*, or thou didſt keep me in ſafety, *when I was upon my mother's breaſts. I was caſt upon thee from the womb, thou art my God from my mother's belly: Be not far from me, for trouble is near:* Trouble is always near to us, and therefore it is happy for us that God is never far from any of us: *For in him we live, and move, and have our being.*

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many miſchiefs and dangers, every moment of our lives; and, without the Providence of God, continually inſecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it ſelf: So that when we come to be men, we cannot but wonder how ever we arrived at that ſtate, and how we have continued in it ſo long, conſidering the infinite difficulties and dangers which have continually attended us: That in running the *gantlope* of a long life, when ſo many hands have been lifted up againſt us, and ſo many ſtrokes levell'd at us, we have eſcaped ſo free, and with ſo few marks and ſcars upon us: That when we are beſieged with ſo many dangers, and ſo many arrows of death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do ſo many ways lie open, we ſhould yet hold out *twenty, forty, ſixty* years, and ſome of us perhaps longer, and ſtill [illegible] the [illegible] untouch'd, at leaſt not dangerouſly wounded by any of them: And conſidering likewiſe this fearful and wonderful frame of a humane Body, this infinitely complicated Engine; in which, to the due performance of the ſeveral functions and offices of life, ſo many ſtrings and ſprings, ſo many receptacles and channels are neceſſary, and all in their

right

right frame and order; and in which, besides the infinite imperceptible and secret ways of mortality, there are so many sluces and flood-gates to let Death in and Life out, that it is next to a miracle, tho' we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not die every day since we were born: I say, considering the nice and curious frame of our Bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of humane Life, which is set in so slippery a place, that we still continue in the land of the living, we cannot ascribe to any thing but the watchful Providence of Almighty God, *who holds our soul in life, and suffers not our foot to be moved.*

To the same merciful Providence of God we owe, that whilst we continue in life we have any comfortable possession and enjoyment of our selves and of that which makes us Men, I mean our Reason and Understanding: That our Imagination is not let loose upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick freaks and fears: That we are not deliver'd up to the horrors of a gloomy and guilty mind: That every day we do not fall into frenzy and distraction, which next to wickedness and vice is the sorest calamity, and saddest disguise of humane Nature: I say, next to wickedness and vice, which is a wilful frenzy, a madness not from misfortune but from choice; whereas the *other* proceeds from natural and necessary causes, such as are in a great measure out of our power; so that we are perpetually liable to it, from any secret and sudden disorder of the Brain, from the violence of a Disease, or the vehement transport of any Passion.

Now if things were under no government, what could hinder so many probable evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the heels of one another? like the calamities of *Job*, when *the hedge which God had set about him and all that he had, was broken down and removed.*

So that if there were no God to take care of us, we could be secure of no sort, no degree of happiness in this World; no not for one moment: And there would be no other World for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the fears and dangers, all the troubles and calamities of this present life: For God and another World stand and fall together: Without *Him* there can be no Life [illegible] this; and if our hopes of happiness were only in this Life, Man of all other Beings [illegible] this lower World would certainly be the most miserable.

I cannot say that all the Evils which I have mentioned would happen to all, if the Providence of God did not rule the World; but that every man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to support and comfort him against the fear of that danger. For the Nature of Man, consider'd by it self, is plainly insufficient for its own happiness; so that we must necessarily look abroad, and seek for it somewhere else: And who can shew us that good that is equal to all the wants and necessities, all the capacities and desires, all the fears and hopes of humane Nature? Whatsoever can answer all these, must have these following Properties,

*First*, It must be an All-sufficient good.
*Secondly*, It must be perfect Goodness.
*Thirdly*, It must be firm and unchangeable in it self.
*Fourthly*, It must be such [illegible] good as none can de[illegible] us of, and take away from us.
*Fifthly*, It must be eternal.
*Sixthly*, It must be able to support and comfort us in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of humane Life.

*Lastly,*

*Lastly*, It must be such a good as can give perfect rest and tranquility to our minds.

Nothing that is short of all this can make us happy: And no Creature, no not the whole Creation, can pretend to be all this to us. All these Properties meet only in God, who is the perfect and supreme Good; as I shall endeavour in the following Discourse, more particularly to shew; and consequently, *That God is the only happiness of Man.*

*First*, God is an All sufficient Good. And this does import *two* things; Wisdom to contrive our happiness, and Power to effect it; for neither of these without the other is sufficient, and both these in the highest and most eminent degree are in God.

He is infinitely *Wise* to design and contrive our happiness; because he knows what Happiness is, and how to frame us so as to be capable of the happiness he designs for us; and how to order and dispose all other things so, as that they shall be no hinderance and impediment to it.

He perfectly understands all the possibilities of things, and how to fit means to any end. He knows all our wants, and how to supply them; all our hopes and desires, and how to satisfie them: He foresees all the dangers and evils which threaten us, and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he think fit; or if he permit them to come, how to support us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater benefit and advantage in the last issue and result of things.

His Wisdom cannot be surprized by any accident which he did not foresee, and which he is not sufficiently provided against. The Wisdom of men is but short and imperfect, and liable to infinite errors and mistakes: In many cases men know not what is safest and best for them, nor whether *this* or *that* will conduce most to their happiness: Nay it often happens that those very means which the wisest men chuse for their security do prove the occasions of their ruine, and they are thrown down by those very ways whereby they thought to raise and to establish themselves.

Especially if God breath upon the Counsels of men, how are their designs blasted? How are they infatuated and foil'd in their deepest contrivances, and *snared in the work of their own hands?* When *it is of the Lord*, the wisdom of the greatest *Politicians* is turned into foolishness: For *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

But the Divine Wisdom, being founded upon infinite knowledge, is thereby secur'd against all possibility of error and mistake. God perfectly knows the natures and the powers of all his Creatures, and therefore can never be mistaken in the use and application of them to any of his purposes: So that none of his designs of love and mercy to the Sons of Men can miscarry for want of good contrivance, or wise conduct.

And as he is perfectly *wise* to contrive our happiness, so is he infinitely *powerful* to effect it, and to remove out of the way all the obstacles and impediments of it. We may understand many times what would conduce to our happiness, but may not be able to compass it; but nothing is out of the reach of Omnipotency: Many things are difficult to us, but nothing is too hard for God: Many things are impossible with us, but *with God all things are possible.* He is the Fountain and Original of all Power, from whom it is deriv'd and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is perfectly subject and subordinate: He can do all things at once, and in an instant, and with the greatest ease; and no created Power can put any difficulty in his

way,

way, much less make any effectual resistance; because Omnipotency can check, and countermand, and bear down before it all other Powers.

So that if God be on our side, who can be against us? We may safely *commit our souls into his hands, for he is able to keep that which is committed to him.* He can give us all good things, and deliver us from all evil, for *his is the Kingdom and the glorious Power.* Though all Creatures should fail us, we may rely upon God, and live upon his All-sufficiency for our supply; and may say with the *Prophet, Though the Fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the Vine; though the labour of the Olive should fail, and the Fields should yield no meat; though the Flock should be cut off from the Fold, and there should be no Herd in the Stalls; yet would I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.*

II. *Secondly*, As God is an All-sufficient Good, so He is perfect Goodness He is willing to communicate happiness to us, and to employ his Power and Wisdom for our Good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being so but our selves. Such is his goodness, that *he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth:* And when we have provoked him by our sins, *he is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. For he delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live.* So that if any of us be miserable, it is our own choice; if we perish, our destruction is of our selves: For as the *Wiseman*, in one of the *Apocryphal* Books, says excellently, *God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living: But men seek death in the errour of their life, and pull destruction upon themselves, with the works of their own hands.*

So great is the goodness of God to mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is necessary to our happiness. He design'd it for us at first, and to that end he hath endowed us with Powers and Faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying *Him* the chief Good And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful transgression and disobedience of the first Parents of Mankind, and were miserably bruised and maimed by their fall, God of his infinite mercy was pleas'd to restore us to a new capacity of happiness, by sending his only Son to suffer in our nature, and in our stead; and thereby to become *a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*, and *the Author of eternal Salvation to them that believe and obey him:* And he hath likewise promised to give us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to that Faith and Obedience which the Gospel requires of us, as the necessary conditions of our eternal Salvation.

III. *Thirdly*, God is also a firm and unchangeable Good. Notwithstanding his infinite Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, we might be miserable if God were mutable. For that cannot be a happiness which depends upon uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greatest aggravations of misery is to fall from happiness, to have been once happy and afterwards to cease to be so: And that would unavoidably happen to us, if the cause of our happiness could change, and the foundation of it be removed. If God could be otherwise than powerful, and wise, and good, all our hopes of happiness would be shaken, and would fall to the ground. But the Divine Nature is not subject to any change: As he is *the Father of Lights*, and *the Author of every good and perfect gift*, so *with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* All the things of this World are mutable, and for that reason, had they no other imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy.

*Fourthly*,

*Fourthly*, God is such a good as none can deprive us of and take away from us. If the things of this World were unchangeable in their nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us happy; because we may be cheated of them by fraud, or robb'd of them by violence: But God cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our Sins can part God and us: *Who shall separate us*, saith the *Apostle*, *from the love of God? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* We may be stripp'd of all our worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, by the violence of men; but none of all these can separate us from God: *I am perswaded*, as *the Apostle* goes on *with great triumph*, *that neither death nor life; nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other Creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ* Jesus, *our Lord. Nor any other Creature:* Here is a sufficient induction of particulars, and nothing left out of this Catalogue but one, and *that* is *Sin*, which is none of God's *Creatures*, but our own: *This* indeed deliberately consented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part God and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy. IV. Rom. 8. 35. Ver. 38, 39.

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can separate between God and us, nothing can deprive us of Him: The aids and influences of his Grace none can intercept and hinder: the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit none can take from us: All other things may leave us and forsake us: We may be debarr'd of our best friends, and banish'd from all our acquaintance; but men can send us no whither from the presence of God: Our Communication with Heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted. Our Prayers and our Souls will always find the way thither from the uttermost parts of the Earth.

*Fifthly*, God is an eternal God: And nothing but what is so can make us happy. Man having an immortal Spirit, and being design'd for an endless duration, must have a happiness proportionable: For which reason nothing in this World can make us happy, because we shall abide and remain after it: When a very few years are past and gone, and much sooner for any thing we know, all the things of this World will leave us, or else we shall be taken away from them. *But God is from everlasting to everlasting: He is the same, and his years fail not:* Therefore well might *David* fix his happiness upon God alone, and say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee: When my heart faileth, and my strength faileth, God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* V.

*Sixthly*, God is able to support and comfort us, in every condition, and under all the accidents and adversities of humane Life. Outward afflictions may hurt our Body, but they cannot reach our Soul; and so long as *that* remains unwounded, *the spirit of a man can bear his infirmities.* God is intimate to our Souls, and hath secret ways whereby to convey the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit into our Hearts, under the bitterest afflictions and sharpest sufferings: He can enable us by his Grace *to possess our souls in patience*, when all other things are taken from us: When there is nothing but trouble about us, He can *give us peace and joy in believing:* When we are *persecuted*, *afflicted*, and tormented, He can give us that ravishing sight of the Glories of another World, that stedfast assurance of a future Blessedness, as shall quite extinguish all sense of present sufferings: How did many of the primitive *Christian Martyrs*, in the midst of their torments, and under the very pangs of death *rejoyce in the hope of the glory of God?* VI.

There are none of us but may happen to fall into those circumstances of danger, and of bodily pains and sufferings, as to have no hopes of relief and comfort but from God; none in all the World to trust to but *Him* only: And in the greatest Evils that can befal us in this life, He is a sure refuge and sanctuary; and to repeat the words of the *Psalmist* after the *Text*, *When our heart fails, and our strength fails, God is the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.*

Now what would any of us do in such a Case, if it were not for God? Humane nature is liable to desperate straits and exigencies: And he is not happy who is not provided against the worst that may happen. It is sad to be reduced to such a condition, as to be destitute of all comfort and hope: And yet men may be brought to that extremity, that if it were not for God they would not know which way to turn themselves, or how to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable considerations under their present anguish.

All men naturally resort to God in extremity, and cry out to him for help: Even the most Profane and Atheistical, when they are destitute of all other comfort, will run to God, and take hold of him, and cling about him. But *God hath no pleasure in fools*; in those who neglect and despise him in their prosperity, though they owe that also entirely to him; but when the evil day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only refuge: When all things go well with them, *God is not in all their thoughts*; but *in their affliction they will seek him early: Then they will cry, Lord, Lord*; but *he will say to them in that day, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I know you not.*

Here will be the great unhappiness of such persons, that God will then appear terrible to them, so as they shall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his frowns: And at the same time that they are forc'd to acknowledge him, and to supplicate to him for mercy and forgiveness, they shall be ready to despair of it: *Then*, those terrible threatnings of God's Word will
Prov. 1. 24, 25, &c. come to their minds; *Because I called, and ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices: The ease of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.*
Isa. 27. 11. To which I will add that terrible Passage in the *Prophet*, concerning the perverse and obstinate *Jews*, *They are a People of no understanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* And men are miserable Creatures indeed, when God their *Maker* doth abandon them, and hath so far hardened his heart against them, that he can have no pity and compassion for them.

*Seventhly* and *Lastly*, Which is consequent upon all the rest, God is such a Good as can give perfect rest and tranquility to our minds. And that which cannot do this, though it had all the Properties before mentioned, cannot make us happy. For he is not happy who does not think himself so, whatever cause he may have to think so. Now what in reason can give us disquiet, if we do firmly believe that there is a God, and that his Providence rules and governs all things for the best; and that God is all that to good Men which hath now been said of Him: Why should not our minds be

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in perfect repoſe, when we are ſecure of the chief Good, and have found out that which can make us happy, and is willing to make us ſo, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, and by our wilful obſtinacy and rebellion againſt him, do not oppoſe and fruſtrate this deſign.

If a conſiderate Man were permitted to his own choice, to wiſh the greateſt good to himſelf that he could poſſibly deviſe; after he had ſearched Heaven and Earth, the reſult of all his wiſhes would be that there were juſt ſuch a Being as we muſt neceſſarily conceive God to be: Nor would he chuſe any other Friend or Benefactor; any other Protector for himſelf or Governour for the whole World, than infinite Power conducted and managed by infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs; which is the true Notion of a God: After all his enquiry he would come to the *Pſalmiſt*'s Concluſion here in the Text, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

Vain Man is apt to ſeek for happineſs elſewhere, but this proceeds from want of due conſideration: For when all things are well weigh'd, and all accounts rightly caſt up and adjuſted, we ſhall at laſt ſettle in *David*'s reſolution of that great *Queſtion*, *What is the chief Good of Man? There be many*, Pſal.4.6,7,8. ſays he, *that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good?* That is, Men are generally inquiſitive after happineſs, but greatly divided in their Opinions about it: Moſt men place it in the preſent enjoyments of this World, but *David* for his part pitches upon God, in whom he was fully convinc'd that the happineſs of Man does conſiſt: *There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their Corn and Wine increaſed.* The great joy of the men of this World is in a plentiful Harveſt, and the abundance of the good things of this life: But *David* had found that which gave more joy and gladneſs to his heart, the favour of God and the *light of his countenance:* This gave perfect reſt and tranquility to his mind, ſo that he needed not to enquire any further: For ſo it follows in the next words, *I will both lay me down in peace, and reſt; for thou, Lord, only makeſt me to dwell in ſafety:* The *Hebrew* word ſignifies *confidence* or *ſecurity:* Here, and no where elſe, his mind found reſt, and was in perfect eaſe and ſecurity.

I ſhall now only make two or three *Inferences* from this Diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

*Firſt*, This plainly ſhews us the great unreaſonableneſs and folly of *Atheiſm*, which would baniſh the belief of God and his Providence out of the World: Which as it is moſt impious in reſpect of God, ſo is moſt malicious to men; becauſe it ſtrikes at the very foundation of our happineſs, and perfectly undermines it. For if there were no God, Man would evidently be the moſt unhappy of all other Beings here below; becauſe his unhappineſs would be laid in the very frame of his nature, in that which diſtinguiſhes him from all other Beings below him, I mean in his Reaſon and Underſtanding: And he would be ſo much more miſerable than the Beaſts, by how much he hath a farther reach, and a larger proſpect of future evils; a quicker apprehenſion, and a deeper and more laſting reſentment of them.

So that if any man could ſee reaſon to ſtagger his belief of a God, or of his Providence, as I am ſure there is infinite reaſon to the contrary; yet the belief of theſe things is ſo much for the intereſt, and comfort, and happineſs of Mankind, that a Wiſe man would be heartily troubled to part with a Principle ſo favourable to his quiet, and that does ſo exactly anſwer all the natural deſires and hopes and fears of Men, and is ſo equally calculated both for our comfort in this World, and for our happineſs in the other. For when a man's

thoughts have ranged and wandred as far as they can, his mind can find no rest, no probable foundation of happiness but God only; no other reasonable, no nor tolerable *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things for a Wise man to rely upon, and to live and die by. For no other Principle but this, firmly believed and truly lived up to by an answerable practice, was ever able to support the generality of Mankind, and to minister true consolation to them under the calamities of life, and the pangs of death.

And if there were not something real in the Principles of Religion, it is impossible that they should have so remarkable and so regular an effect to support our minds in every condition, upon so great a number of persons of different degrees of understanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in so many distant places, and in all Ages of the World, the Records whereof are come down to us: I say so real, and so frequent, and so regular an effect as this is, cannot with any colour of reason be ascribed either to blind Chance, or meer Imagination, but must have a real, and regular, and uniform cause proportionable to so great and general an effect.

I remember that *Grotius*, in his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, hath this observation, That God did not intend that the Principles of Religion should have the utmost evidence that any thing is capable of, and such as is sufficient to answer and bear down all sorts of captious Cavils and objections against it; but so much as is abundantly sufficient to satisfie a sober and impartial Enquirer after Truth, one that hath no other interest but to find out Truth; and when he hath found it, to yield to it: If it were otherwise, and the Principles of Religion were as glaring and evident as the Sun shining at Noon-day, as there could hardly be any virtue in such a Faith, so Infidelity would be next to an impossibility.

All that I would expect from any man, that shall say that he cannot see sufficient reason to believe the *Being* and the *Providence* of God, is this; That he would offer some other *Principles*; that he would advance any other *Hypothesis* and *Scheme* of things that is more agreeable to the common and natural Notions of Men, and to all Appearances of things in the World; and that does bid more fairly for the comfort and happiness of Mankind, than these Principles of the *Being* of a God, and of his watchful *Providence* over the children of men, do plainly do: And till this be clearly done, the Principles of Religion which have generally been received by Mankind, and have obtain'd in the World in all Ages, cannot fairly be discarded, and ought not to be disturbed and put out of Possession. And this, I think puts this whole matter upon a very fair and reasonable Issue, and that nothing more needs to be said concerning it.

2. *Secondly*, From what hath been said, in the foregoing Discourse, it naturally follows, That God is the only Object of our trust and confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to address all our Prayers and Supplications *for mercy and grace to help in time of need*. But now, according to the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of *Rome*, the *Psalmist* here puts a very odd and strange Question, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* To which they must give a quite different answer from what the *Psalmist* plainly intended; namely, that God was the sole Object of his hope and trust, and that upon Him alone he relied as his only comfort and happiness: But to this Assertion of the *Psalmist* the Church of *Rome* can by no means agree: They understand this matter much better than the *Psalmist* did; namely, that besides God there are in Heaven innumerable *Angels* and *Saints*, in whom we are to repose great trust and confidence, and to whom also we are to address solemn

Prayers

Prayers and Supplications, not only for temporal good things, but for the pardon of our Sins, for the increase of our Graces, and for eternal Life: That there are in Heaven particular *Advocates* and *Patrons* for all exigencies and occasions, against all sorts of dangers and diseases, for all Graces and Virtues, and, in a word, for all temporal, spiritual, and eternal Blessings; to whom we may apply our selves, without troubling God and our Blessed Saviour, who also is *God blessed for evermore*, by presuming upon every occasion to make our immediate Addresses to him: For as they would make us believe, tho' *Abraham* was ignorant of it, and *David* knew it not, the blessed Spirits above, both Angels and Saints, do not only intercede with God for us for all sorts of Blessings, but we may make direct and immediate Addresses to them to bestow these Blessings upon us: For so they do in the Church of *Rome*, as is evident, beyond all denial, from several of their *Prayers* in their most publick and authentick *Liturgies*.

They would indeed fain palliate this matter, by telling us, that by these direct and immediate Addresses to Angels and Saints to bestow Grace and eternal Life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleased to intercede with God for these Blessings to be bestowed upon them by their Mediation: But if they mean no more, why do they say more than they mean? Why do they use such expressions as to the common sense and understanding of Mankind do signifie a great deal more than they say they mean; such expressions, as they themselves do acknowledge, if they be understood according to the most obvious sense of the words, would render them guilty of flat Idolatry? Especially when they know, that they are charged with Idolatry upon this account; and since to clear themselves of it they will not alter their Prayers, they justly lie under the suspicion of it.

And yet admitting what they say in this matter to be true, and that by these expressions in their *Prayers* they intend no more but the solemn Invocation of Angels and Saints, that they would intercede with God to bestow these Blessings upon them for the sake of their Merits, and upon their Mediation: Yet this surely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high entrenchment upon the *Office* of the only *Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus*: But let them not deceive themselves *God is not mocked: The Lord our God is a jealous God*, and *He will not give his Glory to another.*

I have not yet instanced in the grossest part of their *Superstition*, not to say down-right Idolatry, in this kind; I mean, in their extravagant Worship of *the blessed Virgin* and *Mother of our Lord*; whom they blasphemously call the *Queen of Heaven*; and whom, by a new style, unknown to the *Scriptures* and *Primitive Antiquity*, they think to dignifie with the *modish* Title of *our Lady*; as if that could be any addition of honour to *Her*, whom the *Angel* declared to be *blessed among Women*: Who, if she knew any thing of the follies of Her Worshippers here below, with what disdain and indignation, do we think She hears those infinite *Prayers* that are made to Her, and that *Sacrilegious* Worship which is given Her in that Church, and which makes both pages of their Religion; and which for the frequency of it, both in their publick and private Devotions, is very much beyond what they give to God and Christ? As if there were *none in Heaven but She*, nor *any thing upon Earth* to be worshipped in comparison of *Her Image*.

Nay, so far have they carried this extravagant Folly, and how much farther they would have carried it, had not the *Reformation* given a check to it, God only knows: So far, I say, have they proceeded in this Folly, as, in that famous *Book* of their *Devotions*, call'd *Our Lady's Psalter*, not only to apply to

Her

Her some part of this *Psalm*, out of which I have taken my *Text*, beginning it thus: *How good is God to* Israel, *to them that worship his Blessed Mother?* But they have likewise profanely *burlesqued*, I cannot afford it a better term, this whole *Book* of *Psalms*, applying to *Her* almost the highest things that are there said concerning *God* and our *Blessed Saviour*. *Hear O Heavens, and give ear O Earth, and be ye horribly astonished*, to see the best and wisest Religion in the World transform'd into Superstition and Folly; and to see the most learned Persons in that Communion set themselves in good earnest to justifie all these follies and absurdities by a grave and groundless pretence to *Infallibility*.

3. *Thirdly* and *Lastly*, This shews us how necessary the favour of God is to every man's happiness: And there is but one way to gain his friendship and favour, by becoming holy and good as He is: Then may we rejoice and glory in God, as the *Psalmist* here does, and say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee*. A wicked Man dreads God above all things in the World, and he has great reason to do so: *For he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him: The foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity*. When by sin we depart from God, we forsake our own happiness: *Salvation is far from the wicked*, says *David*. And again, a little after the *Text*, *They that are*
Psal. 119. *far from thee shall perish, but it is good for me to draw near to God*. Now by Holiness and Goodness we draw near to *Him*, who alone can make us happy.

It is certainly the common interest of mankind there should be a God, because we cannot possibly be happy without Him: But then it is no man's Interest to be wicked, because thereby we make *Him* our Enemy *in whose favour is life*, and upon whom all our hopes of happiness do depend.

To conclude, If we would have God for our Happiness, we must be sure to make him our Friend; and then we may promise to our selves all those advantages which the Friendship of so great and powerful a Patron can give us: And there is but one way to establish a firm Friendship between God and us, and that is, by doing his Will, and living in obedience to his Laws: *Ye are my friends*, saith our blessed Lord, *if ye do whatsoever I command you*: *This is the love of God*, saith St. *John*, *that we keep his commandments*: And to love God is the way to be made partakers of those glorious *things which God hath prepared for them that love Him: Such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man*: Which God of his infinite Goodness grant we may all at last be made partakers of, for his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*: To whom with thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, both now and for ever. ***Amen.***

# SERMON XLI.

*A Thanks-giving Sermon for the late Victory at Sea.*

Preached before the King and Queen at *WHITEHALL*, *October* the 27th, 1692.

## JER. IX. 23, 24.

*Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*



These words are a message from God sent by his Prophet to the People of the *Jews*, who trusted in their own *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*, for their safety and preservation from that Destruction which, in the former part of this *Chapter*, God had threaten'd to bring upon them by the King of *Babylon*. To take them off from this vain confidence is this Message sent to them, *Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

In the handling of these Words, I shall abstract from the particular Occasion of them, and only consider the general Truth contained in them: Which I shall do under these two Heads.

*First,*

*First*, What we are not to glory in: *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches.*

*Secondly*, What it is that is matter of true glory: *But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.*

I. I. *What we are not to glory in.* The *Text* instanceth in *three* things which are the great Idols of Mankind, and in which they are very apt to pride themselves and to place their confidence, namely, *Wisdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*. I shall consider these severally, and shew how little reason there is to glory in any of them.

1. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom.* This may comprehend both humane Knowledge, and likewise Prudence in the management of Affairs. We will suppose both these to be intended here by the name of *Wisdom*, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, that is, neither in the largeness and compass of his Knowledge and Understanding, nor in his Skill and Dexterity in the contrivance and conduct of humane Affairs; and that for these *two* reasons.

1. *First*, Because the highest pitch of humane Knowledge and Wisdom is very imperfect.

*Secondly*, Because when Knowledge and Wisdom are with much difficulty in any competent measure attained, how easily are they lost?

First, *The highest pitch of humane knowledge and wisdom is very imperfect.* Our Ignorance doth vastly exceed our Knowledge at the best. Wisdom in any tolerable degree is difficult to be attain'd, but perfection in it utterly to be despair'd of. Where is there to be found so strong and sound a Head, as hath no soft place; so perfect, so clear an Understanding as hath no flaw, no dark Water in it? How hard a matter is it to be truly wise? And yet there are so many Pretenders to Wisdom as would almost tempt a man to think that nothing is easier. Men do frequently murmur and repine at the unequal distribution of other things, as of health and strength, of power and riches: But if we will trust the judgment of most men concerning themselves, nothing is more equally shar'd among Mankind than a good degree of Wisdom and Understanding. Many will grant others to be superiour to them in other gifts of Nature, as in bodily strength and stature; and in the Gifts of Fortune, as in Riches and Honour; because the difference between one man and another in these qualities is many times so gross and palpable, that no body hath the face to deny it: But very few in comparison, unless it be in mere complement and civility, will yield others to be wiser than themselves; and yet the difference in this also is for the most part very visible to every body but themselves.

So that true Wisdom is a thing very extraordinary. Happy are they that have it: And, next to them, not those many that think they have it, but those few that are sensible of their own defects and imperfections, and know that they have it not.

And among all the kinds of Wisdom none is more nice and difficult, and meets with more frequent disappointments, than that which men are most apt to pride themselves in, I mean *Political* wisdom and prudence; because it depends upon so many contingent Causes, any one of which failing the best laid design breaks and falls in pieces: It depends upon the uncertain wills and

and fickle humours, the mistaken and mutable interests of men, which are perpetually shifting from one point to another, so that no body knows where to find them: Besides an unaccountable mixture of that which the *Heathen* call'd *Fortune*, but we *Christians* by its true name, the *Providence* of God; which does frequently interpose in humane Affairs, and loves to *confound the wisdom of the wise*, and *to turn their counsels into foolishness*.

Of this we have a most remarkable Example in *Achitophel*, of whose wisdom the *Scripture* gives this extraordinary Testimony, That *the counsel which he counselled in those days was as if one had enquired at the Oracle of God: Such was all the counsel of* Achitophel *both with* David *and with* Absalom. It seems he gave very good counsel also to *Absalom*, and because he would not follow it was discontented to that degree as to lay violent hands upon himself: And now who would pride himself in being so very wise as to be able to give the best counsel in the world, and yet so very weak as to make away himself, because he to whom it was given was not wise enough to take it?

The like miscarriages often happen in point of Military skill and prudence. A great *Prince* or *General* is sometimes so very cautious and wary, that nothing can provoke him to a Battle; and then at another time, and perhaps in another Element, so rash and wilful that nothing can hinder him from fighting and being beaten: As if the two Elements made the difference; and caution were great wisdom at Land, and confidence and presumption great prudence at Sea. But the true reason of these things lies much deeper, in the secret Providence of Almighty God, who when he pleases can so govern and over-rule both the understandings and the wills of men, as shall best serve his own wise purpose and design.

And as the highest pitch of humane Wisdom is very imperfect in it self, so is it much more so in comparison with the Divine knowledge and wisdom: Compar'd with this it is mere folly, and less than the understanding and wisdom of a child to that of the wisest man. *The foolishness of God*, says St. *Paul*, *is wiser than men*, that is, the least grain of Divine wisdom is infinitely beyond all the wisdom of men: But in opposition to the wisdom of God, the wisdom of men is less than nothing and vanity. Let men design things never so prudently, and make them never so sure, even to the *Popish* and *French* degree of infallibility; let them reckon upon it as *a Blow that cannot fail:* Yet after all, the counsel of the Lord *that* shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; *for there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel, against the Lord.* 1 Cor. 1. 25.

And now we may ask the Question which *Job* does, *Where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?* And we must answer it as he does, *It is not to be found in the land of the living:* unless it be that one infallible Point of Wisdom to which God directs every man, and of which every man is capable, *viz.* Religion and the Fear of God, *Unto man he said, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.* Job 28. 12. Chap. 28. 12. Job 28. 28.

Secondly, *When knowledge and wisdom are with great difficulty in any competent measure attain'd, how easily are they lost?* By a disease, by a blow upon the head; by a sudden and violent passion, which may disorder the strongest Brain, and confound the clearest Understanding in a moment: Nay even the excess of knowledge and wisdom, especially if attended with pride, as too often it is, is very dangerous, and does many times border upon distraction and run into madness: Like an *Athletick* constitution and perfect state of health, which is observ'd by *Physicians* to verge upon some dangerous Disease, and to be a fore-runner of it.

And when a man's Understanding is once craz'd and shatter'd, how are the finest notions and thoughts of the wisest man blunder'd and broken, perplex'd

and entangled? like a puzled lump of silk, so that the man cannot draw out a thought to any length, but is forc'd to break it off and to begin at another end. Upon all which and many more accounts, *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, which is so very imperfect; so hard to be attain'd, and yet so easie to be lost.

2. 2. *Neither let the mighty man glory in his might.* Which whether it be meant of natural strength of body, or of military force and power, how weak and imperfect is it, and how frequently foil'd by an unequal strength?

If we understand it of the natural strength of men's bodies, how little reason is there to glory in that, in which so many of the Creatures below us do by so many degrees excel us? In that, which may so many ways be lost; by sickness, by a maim, and by many other external Accidents; and which however will decay of it self, and by Age sink into infirmity and weakness.

And how little reason is there to glory in that, which is so frequently foil'd by an unequal strength? of which *Goliah* is a famous instance. When he defied the Host of *Israel*, and would needs have the matter decided by single Combate, God inspired *David* to accept the Challenge; who tho' he was no wise comparable to him in strength, and would have been nothing in his hands in close fight, yet God directed him to assail him at a distance by a weapon that was too hard for him, a stone out of a sling, which struck the Giant in the forehead, and brought his unwieldy bulk down to the Earth.

Or if by *might* we understand military force and power, how little likewise is that to be gloried in? considering the uncertain events of War, and how very often and remarkably the Providence of God doth interpose to cast the Victory on the unlikely side. It is *Solomon*'s observation, that such are the interpositions of Divine Providence in humane Affairs, that the Event of things is many times not at all answerable to the power and probability of

Ecclef. 9. 11. second Causes: *I returned*, says he, *and saw under the Sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.*

And one way, among many others, whereby the Providence of God doth often interpose to decide the Events of War, is by a remarkable change of the Seasons and Weather in favour of one side: As by sending great Snows, or violent Rains, to hinder the early motion and march of a powerful Army, to the disappointment or prejudice of some great Design: By remarkable Winds and Storms at Sea, to prevent the Conjunction of a powerful Fleet: And by governing all these for a long time together so visibly to the Advantage of one Side as utterly to defeat the well-laid design of the other. Of all which, by the great mercy and goodness of God to us, we have had the happy experience in all our late signal Deliverances and Victories.

And here I cannot but take notice of a passage to this purpose in the Book of *Job*: Which may deserve our more attentive regard and consideration, because I take this Book to be incomparably the most ancient of all other, and much elder than *Moses*: And yet it is written with as lively a sense of the Providence of God, and as noble Figures and Flights of Eloquence as perhaps any Book extant in the World. The *Passage* I mean is, where God to convince *Job* of his ignorance in the secrets of Nature and Providence poseth him with

Job 38. 22, 23. many hard Questions, and with this amongst the rest, *Hast thou entred into the treasures of the Snow? hast thou seen the treasures of the Hail, which I have reserv'd against the time of trouble, against the Day of Battle and War?* The meaning of which is, that the Providence of God doth sometimes interpose to determine the Events of War, by governing the Seasons and the Weather, and by making the Snows and Rains, *the Winds and Storms to fulfil his Word* and to execute his Pleasure.

Of

Of this we have a remarkable Instance in the defeat of *Sisera*'s mighty Army; against whom, in the Song of *Deborah*, the *Stars* are said to *have fought in their courses*: The expression is *Poetical*, but the plain meaning of it is, that by mighty and sudden Rains, which the common Opinion did ascribe to a special influence of the *Planets*, the River of *Kishon*, near which *Sisera*'s Army lay, was so raised and swoln as to drown the greatest part of that huge Host. For so *Deborah* explains the *fighting of the Stars in their courses against Sisera*: *They fought*, says she, *from Heaven*, *the Stars in their courses fought against* Sisera, *the River of* Kishon *swept them away*: As if the Stars, which were supposed by their influence to have caused those sudden and extraordinary Rains, had set themselves in Battle array against *Sisera* and his Army.

Therefore, *let not the mighty man glory in his might*, which is so small in it self, but in opposition to God is weakness and nothing. *The weakness of God*, says St. *Paul*, *is stronger than men*. All power to do mischief is but impotence, and therefore no matter of boasting: *Why boastest thou thy self*, *thou Tyrant*, *that thou art able to do mischief? the goodness of God endureth continually*: The goodness of God is too hard for the pride and malice of man, and will last and hold out when that has tir'd and spent it self. Psal 52. 1.

Thirdly, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches*. In these, men are apt to pride themselves: even the meanest and poorest spirits, who have nothing to be proud of but their money, when they have got good store of that together, how will they swell and strut? as if because they are *rich* and *increased in goods* they *wanted nothing*.

But we may do well to consider, that Riches are things without us; not the real Excellencies of our Nature, but the accidental Ornaments of our Fortune. If they descend upon us, they are the Priviledge of our Birth, not the effect of our Wisdom and Industry; and those things in the procurement whereof we had no hand, we can hardly call our own: And if they be the fruit of our own prudent industry, that is no such matter of glorying; because men of much slower understandings do commonly out-do others in diligence and drudging, their minds lying more level to the low design of being rich.

At the best, Riches are uncertain. *Charge them*, says St. *Paul*, *that are rich in this world*, *that they be not high-minded*, *nor trust in uncertain riches*: Men have little reason to pride themselves, or to place their confidence in that which is uncertain, and even next to that which is not: So the wise man speaks of Riches, *Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings*, *and fly as an Eagle towards Heaven*: He expresses it in such a manner, as if a rich man sat brooding over an Estate till it was *fledg'd* and had gotten it self wings to fly away. Prov. 23. 5.

But that which is the most stinging consideration of all is, that many men have an evil eye upon a good Estate; so that instead of being the means of our happiness, it may prove the occasion of our ruin: So the same Wise man observes, *There is a sore evil which I have seen under the Sun*, *namely*, *riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt*. And it is not without example, that a very rich man hath been excepted out of a general Pardon, both as to Life and Estate, for no other visible reason but his vast and overgrown Fortune: So *Solomon* observes to us again, *Such are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain*, *which taketh away the life of the owners thereof*. And why should any man be proud of his danger, of that which one time or other may be the certain and only cause of his ruin? A man may be too rich to be forgiven a fault which would never have been prosecuted against a man of a middle Fortune. For these reasons, and a great many more, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches*. Eccles. 5. 13. Prov. 1. 18.

II. II. I proceed to consider, *What it is that is matter of true glory. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth: For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.*

*That he understandeth and knoweth me:* Here are two words used to express the thing more fully, *understanding* and *knowledge*; which seem not only to import right apprehensions of the Being, and Providence, and Perfections of God; but likewise a lively sense of these things, and affections suitable to these apprehensions.

*That he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord*, that is, the Creator and the Sovereign Governour of the World.

*Which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness, in the Earth.*

The best Knowledge of Religion, and that which is the foundation of all the rest, is the Knowledge of the Divine Nature and Perfections: especially of those which are most proper for our imitation; and such are those mention'd in the *Text, loving-kindness*, and *judgment*, and *righteousness*; which we may distinguish thus: *Loving kindness* comprehends God's milder Attributes, his *Goodness*, and *Mercy*, and *Patience: Judgment* signifies his severer dealings with men, whether in the chastisement of his People, or in the remarkable Punishment of great Offenders for example and warning to others: *Righteousness* seems to be a word of a larger signification, and to denote that universal Rectitude of the Divine Nature which appears in all the Administrations of his Providence here below; for the Text speaks of the Exercise of these Perfections in this World: *which exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.*

Several of the Perfections of the Divine Nature are incommunicable to a Creature, and therefore cannot be thought to be proposed to us for a Pattern; as *self existence, independence*, and *all-sufficiency*; the *eternity*, and the *immensity* of the Divine Being: To be the *original Cause* of all other things, and the *Sovereign Governour* of the whole World: For God only is sufficient for *that*; and to be a Match for all the World, a *nec pluribus impar*, is not a *Motto* fit for a mortal man. A Creature may swell with pride till it burst, before it can stretch it self to this pitch of Power and Greatness: It is an insufferable Presumption, and a sottish Ignorance of the necessary Bounds and Limits of our Being, to think to resemble God in these Perfections: This was the Ambition of *Lucifer*, to *ascend into Heaven*, and to *be like the most High.*

In our imitation of God we must still keep within the station of Creatures; not affecting an *independency* and *sovereignty* like God, and to be *omnipotent*
Job 40. 9. as he is: *Hast thou an arm like God, and canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?* as God himself argues with *Job.*

*For in these things I delight, saith the Lord.* God takes pleasure to exercise these Perfections himself, and to see them imitated by us; and the imitation of these Divine Perfections is our perfection and glory; in comparison of which all humane *wisdom*, and *power*, and *riches*, are so far from being matter of glory, that they are very despicable and pitiful things: Knowledge and Skill to devise mischief, and power to effect it, are the true Nature and Character of the Devil and his Angels; those apostate and accursed Spirits, who in temper and disposition are most contrary to God, who is the Rule and Pattern of all perfection.

I shall only make two *Observations* or *Inferences* from what hath been said, and then apply the whole Discourse to the great Occasion of this Day: And they are these.

*First,*

*First*, That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the unquestionable Perfections of the Divine Nature.

*Secondly*, That the Nature of God is the true *Idea* and Pattern of Perfection and Happiness.

First, *That the wisest and surest Reasonings in Religion are grounded upon the unquestionable Perfections of the Divine Nature:* Upon those more especially which to us are most easie and intelligible: such as are those mentioned in the *Text*. And this makes the Knowledge of God, and of these Perfections, to be so useful and so valuable: Because all Religion is founded in right Notions of God, and of his Perfections: Insomuch that Divine Revelation it self does suppose these for its foundation, and can signifie nothing to us unless these be first known and believed: For unless we be first firmly perswaded of the Providence of God, and of his particular care of Mankind, why should we suppose that he makes any Revelation of his Will to us? Unless it be first naturally known that God is a God of Truth, what ground is there for the belief of his Word? So that the Principles of *Natural* Religion are the foundation of that which is reveal'd: And therefore nothing can in Reason be admitted to be a Revelation from God, which does plainly contradict his essential Perfections.

Upon this *Principle*, a great many *Doctrines* are without more ado to be rejected, because they do plainly and at first sight contradict the Divine Nature and Perfections. I will give a few *Instances*, instead of many that might be given.

In virtue of this *Principle* I cannot believe, upon the pretended Authority or Infallibility of any Person or Church, that Force is a fit Argument to produce Faith: No man shall ever perswade me, no not the Bishop of *Meaux* with all his Eloquence, that Prisons and Tortures, Dragoons and the Galleys, are proper means to convince the Understanding, and either *Christian* or *Humane* Methods of converting men to the true Religion.

For the same Reason I cannot believe, that God would not have men to understand their publick Prayers, nor the Lessons of Scripture which are read to them: Because a Lesson is something that is to be learnt, and therefore a Lesson that is not to be understood is nonsense; for if it be not understood how can it be learnt?

As little can I believe, that God who caused the *Holy Scriptures* to be written for the Instruction of Mankind, did ever intend that *they* should be lock'd up and concealed from the People in an unknown Tongue.

Least of all can I believe that *Doctrine* of the Council of *Trent*, That the saving Efficacy of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the intention of the Priest that administers them: Which is to say, that tho' the People believe and live never so well, yet they may be damn'd by shoals, and whole Parishes together, at the pleasure of the Priest: And this for no other reason, but because the Priest is so cross and so cruel that he will not intend to save them.

Now can any man believe this, that hath any tolerable Notion either of the Goodness or Justice of God? May we not appeal to God in this, as *Abraham* did in another Case? *Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee, to do after this manner: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Much more, to destroy the righteous for the wicked, and that righteous and innocent People should lye at the mercy and will of a wicked and perverse Priest, to be sav'd or damn'd by him as he thinks fit, *That be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* For, to drive the argument to the head, if this be to do right there is no possibility of doing wrong.

Thus in things which are more obscure we should govern all our Reasonings concerning God and Religion by that which is clear and unquestionable, and

should

should with *Moses* lay down this for a certain Principle, *All his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He:* And say with St. *Paul, Is there then unrighteousness with God? God forbid.* And again, *We know that the Judgment of God is according to truth.*

2*ly*, The other *Inference* is this, *That the Nature of God is the true* Idea *and Pattern of Perfection and Happiness:* And therefore nothing but our own conformity to it can make us happy: And for this reason, to understand and know God is our great excellency and glory, because it is necessary to our imitation of *Him* who is the best and happiest Being. And so far as we are from resembling God, so far are we distant from Happiness and the true temper of the Blessed. For Goodness is an essential ingredient of Happiness; and as without Goodness there can be no true Majesty and Greatness, so neither any true Felicity and Blessedness.

Now Goodness is a generous disposition of mind to diffuse and communicate it self by making others to partake of our Happiness, in such degrees as they are capable: For no Being is so happy as it might be, that hath not the power and the pleasure to make others happy: This surely is the highest pleasure, I had almost said pride, of a great Mind.

In vain therefore do we dream of Happiness in any thing without us. Happiness must be within us; the foundation of it must be laid in the inward frame and disposition of our spirits: And the very same causes and ingredients which make up the Happiness of God must be found in us, tho' in a much inferior degree, or we cannot be happy. They understand not the nature of Happiness, who hope for it upon any other terms: He who is the Author and Fountain of Happiness cannot convey it to us by any other way, than by planting in us such dispositions of mind as are in truth a kind of participation of the Divine Nature, and by enduing us with such qualities as are the necessary Materials of Happiness: And a man may as soon be well without Health as happy without Goodness.

If a wicked man were taken up into Heaven, yet if he still continue the same bad man that he was before, *cœlum, non animum mutavit,* he may have chang'd the *Climate,* and be gone into a far Country; but because he carries *himself* still along with him, he will still be miserable from himself: Because the man's mind is not chang'd all the while, which would signifie a thousand times more to his happiness, than change of place, or of any outward circumstances whatsoever: For a bad man hath a *Fiend* in his own Breast, and the fewel of Hell in his guilty Conscience.

There is a certain kind of temper and disposition which is necessary and essential to Happiness, and *that* is Holiness and Goodness, which is the very Nature of God; and so far as any man departs from this temper, so far he removes himself and runs away from Happiness. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil disposition of a man's own mind, which is naturally a torment to it self: And till this be cur'd, it is as impossible for him to be happy, as for a Limb that is out of joint to be at ease; because the man's Spirit is out of order, and off the hinges, and as it were toss'd from its Center; and till that be set right and restored to its proper and natural state, the man will be perpetually unquiet, and can have no rest and peace within himself. *The wicked,* saith the *Prophet, is like the troubled Sea, when it cannot rest: There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:* No peace with God, no peace with his own mind; for a bad man is at perpetual discord and wars within himself: And *hence,* as St. *James* tells us, *come wars and fightings without us, even from our lusts which war in our members.*

And now that I have mention'd *wars and fightings without us,* this cannot

but bring to mind the great and glorious Occasion of this Day: Which gives us manifold cause of Praise and Thanksgiving to Almighty God: For several wonderful Mercies and Deliverances; and more particularly, for a most glorious Victory at Sea, vouchsafed to their *Majesties* Fleet in this last Summer's Expedition.

For several great Mercies and Deliverances: For a wonderful Deliverance indeed, from a sudden *Invasion* design'd upon us by the inveterate and implacable Enemies of our Peace and Religion; which by the merciful Providence of God was happily and strangely prevented, when it was just upon the point of execution.

Next, for the preservation of our *Gracious Sovereign*, from that horrid and most barbarous Attempt design'd upon his Sacred Person: And from those great and manifold Dangers to which he was exposed in his late tedious Expedition: And for His safe and most welcome Return to us.

And lastly, For a most glorious *Victory at Sea*: The greatest and the cheapest that ever the Sun saw, from his first setting out to run his Course. The Opportunity indeed of this Victory was thro' the rashness and confidence of our Enemies, by the wise Providence of God, put into our hands: But the improvement of this Opportunity into so great and happy a Victory, we owe under God, to the matchless Conduct and Courage of the brave *Admiral*, and to the invincible Resolution and Valour of the *Captains* and *Seamen*.

This great Deliverance from the design'd *Invasion*, and this glorious *Victory*, God vouchsafed to us *at Home*, whilst His Sacred Majesty was so freely hazarding his Royal Person *abroad*, in the Publick Cause of the Rights and Liberties of almost all *Europe*.

And now what may God justly expect from us, as a meet return for his Goodness to us? What? but that we should *glorifie* Him, first by *offering praise* and thanksgiving; and then, by *ordering our conversation aright*, that he may still delight to *shew* us *his Salvation*.

God might have stood aloof from us in the Day of our Distress, and have said to us, as he once did to the People of *Israel*, so often have I deliver'd you from the hands of your Enemies, but ye have still provok'd me more and more, *Wherefore I will deliver you no more*: He might have said of us, as he
did of the same People, *I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end* Judg. 10. 13 Deut. 32. 20.
*shall be: For they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith*: Our resolutions and promises of better obedience are not to be trusted; all our Repentance and *Righteousness* are but *as the morning cloud, and like the early dew which passeth away*: Nay methinks God seems now to say to us, as he did of old to *Jerusalem*, *Be instructed*, O Jerusalem, *lest my soul depart from thee, and I make thee desolate, a Land not inhabited.* Jer. 6. 8.

We are here met together this Day, to pay our Solemn acknowledgments to *the God of our Salvation*; *who hath shewed strength with his arm, and hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart*: Even to *him that exerciseth loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth*: In *Him* will we glory as our sure Refuge and Defence, as our Mighty Deliverer, and the Rock of our Salvation.

And now I have only to entreat your patience a little longer, whilst I apply what hath been discoursed upon this *Text* a little more closely to the Occasion of this Day. I may be tedious, but I will not be long.

And blessed be God for this happy *Occasion*: The greatest *England* ever had, and, in the true consequences of it, perhaps the greatest that *Europe* ever had of Praise and Thanksgiving.

You have heard two sorts of Persons described in the *Text*, by very diffe-

rent

rent Characters: The *One*, that glory in their *Wisdom* and *Might*, and Riches: The *other*, that *glory in this*, *that* they *understand and know God to be the Lord, which exerciseth loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth.*

And we have seen these two *Characters* exemplified, or rather drawn to the Life, in this present Age. We who live in this Western part of *Christendom* have seen a *mighty Prince*, by the just permission of God, raised up to be a Terror and Scourge to all his Neighbours: A *Prince*, who had in perfection all the Advantages mentioned in the former part of the *Text:* And who, in the opinion of many who had been long dazzled with his Splendour and Greatness, hath pass'd for many years, for the most *Politick*, and *Powerful*, and *Richest Monarch* that hath appear'd in these parts of the World, for many Ages.

Who hath govern'd his Affairs by the deepest and steddiest Counsels, and the most refin'd Wisdom of this World: A Prince mighty and powerful in his preparations for War; formidable for his vast and well disciplin'd Armies, and for his great Naval Force: And who had brought the Art of War almost to that perfection, as to be able to Conquer and do his business without fighting: A Mystery hardly known to former Ages and Generations: And all this Skill and Strength united under one absolute Will, not hamper'd or bound up by any restraints of Law or Conscience.

A Prince that commands the Estates of all his Subjects, and of all his Conquests; which hath furnished him with an almost inexhaustible Treasure and Revenue: And One, who if the World doth not greatly mistake him, hath sufficiently *gloried* in all these Advantages, and even beyond the rate of a mortal man.

But not *knowing God to be the Lord, which exercises loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth*; How hath the pride of all his Glory been stain'd by Tyranny and Oppression, by Injustice and Cruelty; by enlarging his Dominions without Right, and by making War upon his Neighbours without Reason, or even colour of Provocation? And this in a more barbarous manner than the most barbarous Nations ever did; carrying Fire and Desolation wheresoever he went, and laying waste many and great Cities without necessity, and without pity.

And now behold what a terrible Rebuke the Providence of God hath given to this mighty Monarch, in the full Carier of his Fortune and Fury. The consideration whereof brings to my thoughts those passages in the *Prophet* concerning old *Babylon*, that standing and perpetual Type of the great Oppressors and Persecutors of God's true Church and Religion: *How is the Oppressor ceased?*
Isa. 14. *the exacter of gold ceased? He who smote the People in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled the Nations in anger is himself persecuted, and none hindreth. The whole Earth is at rest and is quiet, and breaks forth into singing: The grave beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the Captains of the Earth; it hath raised up from their Thrones all the Kings of the Nations; all they shall speak and say unto thee, art thou also become weak as we are? art thou also become like unto us? how art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground that didst weaken the Nations? For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God; I will sit also upon the Mount of the Congregation in the sides of the North*, that is, upon Mount
Psal. 48. 2. *Zion*, for just so the *Psalmist* describes it, *Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole Earth is Mount* Zion, *on the sides of the North.* Here the King of *Babylon* threatens to take *Jerusalem*, and to demolish the *Temple* where the Congregation of *Israel* met for the Worship of the true God; *I will also sit upon the Mount of the Congregation in the sides of the North.* Much in the same style

with

with the threatnings of Modern *Babylon*, *I will destroy the Reformation, I will extirpate the Northern Heresie.*

And then he goes on, *I will ascend above the height of the Clouds, I will be like the most High: Yet thou shalt be brought down to the grave, to the sides of the pit: They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the Earth to tremble, that did shake Kingdoms; that made the World as a Wilderness, and destroyed the Cities thereof, and opened not the House of his Prisoners?*

God seems already to have begun this Work, in the late glorious Victory at Sea; and I hope he will *cut it short in righteousness.* I have sometimes heretofore wondred, Why at the destruction of Modern and Mystical *Babylon* the Scripture should make so express mention of great wailing and lamentation for the loss of her *Ships* and *Seamen*: Little imagining thirty years ago, that any Rev. 18. 17 of the *Kingdoms* who had *given their power to the Beast* would ever have arrived to that mighty *Naval* Force: But the *Scripture saith nothing in vain.*

Whether, and how far, Success is an Argument of a good Cause, I shall not now debate: But thus much, I think may safely be affirmed, That the Providence of God doth sometimes, without plain and down-right Miracles, so visibly shew it self, that we cannot without great stupidity and obstinacy refuse to acknowledge it.

I grant, the Cause must first be manifestly just, before Success can be made an Argument of God's favour to it and approbation of it: And if the Cause of true Religion, and the necessary defence of it against a false and idolatrous Worship, be a good Cause, *Ours* is so: And I do not here beg the Question; we have abundantly proved it to the confusion of our Adversaries: If the vindication of the common Liberties of Mankind, against Tyranny and Oppression, be a good Cause, then *Ours* is so: And this needs not to be proved, it is so glaringly evident to all the World. And as our Cause is not like *theirs*, so neither hath *their Rock* been *like our Rock, our Enemies themselves being Judges.*

And yet as bad an Argument as success is of a good Cause, I am sorry to say it, but I am afraid it is true, it is like in the conclusion to prove the best Argument of all other to convince those who have so long pretended Conscience against submission to the present Government.

Meer success is certainly one of the worst Arguments in the World of a good Cause, and the most improper to satisfie Conscience; And yet we find by experience, that in the issue it is the most successful of all other Arguments; and does in a very odd, but effectual way, satisfie the Consciences of a great many men by shewing them their Interest.

God has of late visibly made bare his Arm in our behalf, tho' some are still so blind and obstinate that they will not see it: Like those of whom the Prophet complains, *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not see, but they* Isa. 26. 11. *shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at thy People.*

Thus have I represented unto you a mighty *Monarch*, who like a fiery *Comet* hath hung over *Europe* for many years; and by his malignant influence hath made such terrible havock and devastations in this part of the World.

Let us now turn our View to the other part of the *Text*: And behold a greater than he is here: A Prince of a quite different Character, who does *understand and know God to be the Lord, which doth exercise loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the Earth*: And who hath made it the great study and endeavour of his life to imitate these Divine Perfections, as far as the imperfection of humane Nature in this mortal state will admit: I say, a greater than he is here: who never said or did an insolent thing, but instead of despising his Enemies, has upon all occasions encounter'd them with an undaunted Spirit and Resolution.

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This is the Man whom God hath honoured to give a Check to this mighty Man of the Earth, and to put a hook into the Nostrils of this great *Leviathan* who has so long had his pastime in the Seas.

But we will not insult, as he once did in a most unprincely manner over a Man much better than himself, when he believed Him to have been slain at the *Boyne*: And indeed Death came then as near to him as was possible without killing him: But the merciful Providence of God was pleased to step in for his Preservation, almost by a Miracle: For I do not believe that from the first use of great Guns to *that* Day, any mortal man ever had his shoulder so kindly kiss'd by a Cannon-bullet.

But I will not trespass any further upon that which is the great Ornament of all his other Virtues; though I have said nothing of Him but what all the World does see and must acknowledge: He is as much above being flatter'd, as it is beneath an honest and a generous mind to flatter.

Let us then glory in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our Salvation: Let us now in the presence of all his People pay our most thankful acknowledgements to him *who is worthy to be praised*; even to *the Lord God of Israel, who alone doth wondrous things*: Who *giveth Victory unto Kings*, and hath *preserved* our *David his Servant from the hurtful Sword*.

And let us humbly beseech Almighty God that he would long preserve to us the invaluable Blessing of our two excellent Princes; whom the Providence of God hath sent amongst us, like two good Angels; not to rescue two or three Persons, but almost a whole Nation out of *Sodom*: By saving us I hope at last from our Vices, as well as at first from that Vengeance which was just ready to have been poured down upon us.

Two Sovereign Princes reigning together, and in the same Throne; and yet so intirely one, as perhaps no Nation, no Age can furnish us with a Parallel: Two Princes perfectly united in the same Design of promoting the true Religion, and the Publick Welfare, by reforming our Manners, and as far as is possible, by repairing the breaches, and healing the Divisions of a miserable distracted Church and Nation: In a word, Two Princes who are contented to sacrifice Themselves and their whole Time to the care of the Publick: And for the sake of that to deny themselves almost all sorts of ease and pleasure: *To deny themselves*, did I say? No, they have wisely and judiciously chosen the truest and highest Pleasure that this World knows, the Pleasure of doing good, and being Benefactors to Mankind. May they have a long and happy Reign over us, to make us happy, and to lay up in store for Themselves a Happiness without measure, and without end, in God's glorious and everlasting Kingdom: For his Mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with thee, *O Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

# SERMON XLII.

## *Against Evil-speaking.*

## Preached before the King and Queen at *WHITEHALL*, *February* the 25th. 169¾.

### TIT. III. 2.

*To speak evil of no man.*



GEneral Perswasives to Repentance and a good Life, and Invectives against Sin and Wickedness at large, are certainly of good use to recommend Religion and Virtue, and to expose the deformity and danger of a vicious Course. But it must be acknowledg'd on the other hand, that these general Discourses do not so immediately tend to reform the Lives of men: Because they fall among the Croud, but do not touch the Consciences of particular Persons in so sensible and awakening a manner as when we treat of particular Duties and Sins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper Arguments taken from the Word of God, and from the nature of particular Virtues and Vices.

The *general* way is, as if a Physician, instead of applying particular Remedies to the Distemper of his Patient, should entertain him with a long discourse of Diseases in general, and of the pleasure and advantages of Health; and earnestly perswade him to be well; without taking his particular Disease into consideration, and prescribing Remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we must take to task the great and common disorders of their Lives, and represent their faults to them in such a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning Vices of the Age, *Calumny* and *Evil-speaking*; by which men contract so much guilt to themselves, and create so much trouble to others: And from which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free. For *who is he*, saith the Son of Eccl. 19. 16.
*Sirach*, *that hath not offended with his tongue? In many things*, saith St. *James*, James 3. 2.
*we offend all: And if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

But how few have attain'd to this perfection? And yet unless we do endeavour after it, and in some good measure attain it, all our pretence to Religion is vain: So the same *Apostle* tells us, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.* James 1. 26.

For the more distinct handling of this Argument, I shall reduce my Discourse to these *Five* Heads.

*First*, I shall consider the Nature of this Vice, and wherein it consists.

*Secondly*, I shall consider the due extent of this Prohibition, *To speak evil of no man.*

*Thirdly*, I shall shew the Evil of this practice, both in the *Causes* and *Effects* of it.

*Fourthly*, I shall add some further Considerations to disswade men from it.

*Fifthly*, I shall give some Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I. I shall consider *what this Sin or Vice of Evil-speaking, here forbidden by the Apostle, is: μηδένα βλασφημεῖν*, not to defame and slander any man, not to *hurt his reputation*, as the *Etymology* of the word doth import. So that this Vice consists in saying things of others which tend to their disparagement and reproach, to the taking away or lessening of their Reputation and good Name. And this, whether the things said be true or not. If they be false, and we know it, then it is down-right *Calumny*; and if we do not know it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a *Slander*; and so much the more injurious because really groundless and undeserved.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be so, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our Neighbour's reputation: And it is a fault to say the evil of others which is true, unless there be some good reason for it besides: Because it is contrary to that charity and goodness which *Christianity* requires, to divulge the faults of others, tho' they be really guilty of them, without necessity or some other very good reason for it.

Again, It is *Evil-speaking* and the Vice condemn'd in the *Text*, whether we be the first Authors of an ill Report, or relate it from others; because the man that is evil spoken of is equally defam'd either way.

Again, Whether we speak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: The former way indeed seems to be the more generous, but yet is a great Fault, and that which we call *reviling:* The latter is more mean and base, and that which we properly call *Slander* or *Backbiting.*

And Lastly, Whether it be done directly and in express terms, or more obscurely and by way of oblique insinuation; whether by way of down-right reproach, or with some crafty preface of commendation: For so it have the effect to defame, the manner of address does not much alter the case: The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot less faulty: For many times the deepest Wounds are given by these smoother and more artificial ways of Slander; as by asking questions, *Have you not heard so and so of such a man? I say no more, I only ask the question:* Or by general intimations, that *they are loth to say what they have heard of such a one, are very sorry for it, and do not at all believe it*, if you will believe *them:* And this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to suspect the worst.

These and such like Arts, tho' they may seem to be tenderer and gentler ways of using men's reputation, yet in truth they are the most malicious and effectual methods of Slander; because they insinuate something that is much worse than is said, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a strong belief of something that is very bad, tho' they know not what it is. So that it matters not in what fashion a Slander is dress'd up, if it tend to defame a man and to diminish his Reputation, it is the Sin forbidden in the *Text.*

II. II. We will consider *the extent of this Prohibition to speak evil of no man*; and the due *bounds and limitations of it.* For it is not to be understood absolutely,

solutely, to forbid us to say any thing concerning others that is bad. This in some cases may be necessary and our duty, and in several cases very fit and reasonable. The Question is, In what Cases by the general Rules of Scripture and right Reason we are warranted to say the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reason and necessity; as, for the prevention of some great evil, or the procuring of some considerable good to our selves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the Son of *Sirach*, *Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canst without offence reveal them not*; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canst conceal them, divulge them not. Eccl. 19. 8.

But because this may not be direction sufficient, I shall instance in some of the principal Cases wherein men are warranted to speak evil of others, and yet in so doing do not offend against this Prohibition in the *Text*.

*First*, It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this in order to the probable amendment of the person of whom evil is spoken. In such a case we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be so fit for us to use that boldness and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and proper to reprove him, and will probably make no other use of this discovery but in order to his amendment. And this is so far from being a breach of Charity, that it is one of the best Testimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindness to give him the opportunity of vindicating himself: Or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this Case the Son of *Sirach* adviseth to reveal mens faults; *Admonish a friend*, says he, *it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more: Admonish a friend, it may be he hath not said it; and if he have, that he speak it not again: Admonish a friend, for many times it is a slander; and believe not every tale.* Ecclus. 19.13, 14, 15.

But then we must take care that this be done out of kindness, and that nothing of our own passion be mingled with it: and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in such a manner as if we did it to shew our *authority* rather than our *charity*. It requires a great deal of address and gentle application so to manage the business of Reproof, as not to irritate and exasperate the person whom we reprove, instead of curing him.

*Secondly*, This likewise is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witness concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuser, unless the publick good, or the prevention of some great evil should require it. And then the plain reason of the thing will sufficiently justifie a voluntary accusation: otherwise it hath always among well-manner'd People been esteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward Informer concerning the misdemeanour of others. *Magistrates* may sometimes think it fit to give encouragement to such persons, and to set one bad man to catch another, because such men are fittest for such dirty work: But they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their Friends and Confidents.

But when a man is call'd to give testimony in this kind in obedience to the Laws, and out of reverence to the Oath taken in such Cases, he is so far from deserving blame for so doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

*Thirdly*, It is lawful to publish the faults of others, in our own necessary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal anothers faults with-

out betraying his own innocency, no charity requires a man to suffer himself to be defamed to save the reputation of another man. *Charity begins at home*; and tho' a man had never so much goodness, he would first secure his own good name, and then be concern'd for other mens. We are *to love our Neighbour as our selves*; so that the love of our selves is the Rule and measure of our love to our Neighbour: And therefore *first*, otherwise it could not be the *Rule*. And it would be very well for the World, if our Charity would rise thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

*Fourthly*, This also is lawful for caution and warning to a third person, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by reposing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or suspicion of his bad qualities: But even in this case we ought to take great care that the ill character we give of any man be spread no further than is necessary to the good end we designed in it.

Besides these more obvious and remarkable Cases, this Prohibition doth not I think hinder but that in ordinary conversation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be: Or that one friend may not in freedom speak to another of the miscarriage of a third person, where he is secure no ill use will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his Prejudice: Provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or speaking ill of others: And the less we do it, tho' without any malice or design of harm, still the better; because this shews that we do not feed upon ill reports and take pleasure in them.

These are all the usual Cases in which it may be necessary for us to speak evil of other men. And these are so evidently reasonable that the Prohibition in the *Text* cannot with reason be extended to them. And if no man would allow himself to say any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in these and the like Cases, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the World would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III. III$^{d}$ place, to consider *the evil of this Practice*, both in the *Causes* and the *Consequences of it*.

*First*, We will consider the *Causes* of it. And it commonly springs from one or more of these evil Roots.

*First*, One of the deepest and most common *Causes* of *evil-speaking* is *ill-nature* and cruelty of disposition: And by a general mistake *Ill-nature* passeth for *Wit*, as *Cunning* doth for *Wisdom*; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far distant as *Vice* and *Virtue*.

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of Mankind, than the general proneness of Men to this Vice. For (as our *Saviour* says) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. And therefore men do commonly incline to the censorious and uncharitable side: which shews humane Nature to be strangely distorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The Wit of Man doth more naturally vent it self in *Satyr* and Censure, than in Praise and *Panegyrick*. When men set themselves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and straining; and if any thing be fitly said in that kind, it doth hardly relish with most men: But in the way of *Invective*, the Invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing Spring: And this kind of Wit is not more easie than it is acceptable: It is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abused, not considering how soon it may come to his own turn to lye down and make sport for others.

To

To ſpeak evil of others, is almoſt become the general entertainment of all Companies: And the great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt Meetings and Viſits, after the neceſſary Ceremonies and Complements are over, is to ſit down and back-bite all the World. 'Tis the *Sawce* of Converſation, and all Diſcourſe is counted but flat and dull which hath not ſomething of *piquancy* and ſharpneſs in it againſt ſome body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleas'd with ill reports, and drink them in with greedineſs and delight: Though at the ſame time they have ſo much Juſtice, as to hate thoſe that propagate them; and ſo much Wit, as to conclude that theſe very perſons will do the ſame for them in another Place and Company.

But eſpecially, if it concerns one of another *Party*, and that differs from us in matters of Religion; in this Caſe, all Parties ſeem to be agreed that they do God great ſervice in blaſting the reputation of their Adverſaries: And though they all pretend to be *Chriſtians*, and the *Diſciples* of *Him* who taught nothing but *kindneſs* and *meekneſs* and *charity*; yet it is ſtrange to ſee with what a ſalvage and murderous diſpoſition they will flie at one anothers Reputation and tear it in pieces: And whatever other *Scruples* they may have, they make none to beſpatter one another in the moſt bitter and ſlanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their Adverſaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections do they raiſe againſt it? and with what coldneſs do they at laſt admit it? *It is very well*, ſay they, *if it be true: I ſhall be glad to hear it confirm'd. I never heard ſo much good of him before. You are a good man your ſelf, but have a care you be not deceived.*

Nay it is well, if to ballance the matter, and ſet things even, they do not clap ſome infirmity and fault into the other Scale, that ſo the Enemy may not go off with flying Colours.

But on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial Author of an ill Report. I do not apply this to any one ſort of men, tho' all are to blame this way; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To ſpeak impartially, the *Zealots* of all *Parties* have got a *ſcurvy trick* of lying for the Truth.

But of all ſorts of People, I have obſerved the *Prieſts* and *Bigots* of the Church of *Rome* to be the ableſt in this way, and to have the ſtrongeſt Faith for a luſty Falſhood and Calumny. Others will bandy a falſe Report, and toſs it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would ſo hug a Lye and be ſo very fond of it. They ſeem to be deſcribed by St. *John* in that expreſſion in the Revelation, *Whoſoever loveth and maketh a lye.*

Another ſhrewd ſign that *ill-nature* lies at the root of this *Vice* is, that we eaſily forget the good that is ſaid of others, and ſeldom make mention of it; but the contrary ſticks with us, and lies uppermoſt in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occaſions: And which is yet more ill-natur'd and unjuſt, many times when we do not believe it our ſelves, we tell it to others, with this charitable Caution, *That we hope it is not true:* But in the mean time we give it our *Paſs*, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it comes.

*Secondly*, Another Cauſe of the commonneſs of this Vice is, that many are ſo bad themſelves, in one kind or other. For to think and ſpeak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a ſign of a bad man. Our *Bleſſed Saviour*, ſpeaking of the evil of the *laſt days*, gives this as the reaſon of the great decay of Charity among men; *Becauſe Iniquity ſhall abound, the Love of many ſhall* Matt. 24. 12. *wax cold.* When men are bad themſelves, they are glad of any opportunity to cenſure others, and are always apt to ſuſpect that evil of other men which they

they know by themselves. They cannot have a good opinion of themselves, and therefore are very unwilling to have so of any body else; and for this reason they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be some justification of them if they can but render others as bad as themselves.

*Thirdly*, Another source of this Vice is *Malice* and *Revenge*. When men are in Heat and Passion, they do not consider what is true, but what is spiteful and mischievous; and speak evil of others in revenge of some injury which they have received from them: And when they are blinded by their Passions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they speak be true or not. Nay many are so *Devilish*, as to invent and raise false Reports on purpose to blast mens Reputation. This is a *Diabolical* temper, and therefore St. *James* tells us that the slanderous *Tongue is set on fire of Hell:* And the *Devil* hath his very *Name* from *Calumny* and false Accusation; and it is his *Nature* too, for he is always ready to stir up and foment this evil spirit among them: Nay, the *Scripture* tells us that he hath the malice and impudence to accuse good men before God; as he did *Job* charging him with *Hypocrisie* to God himself; *Who*, he knows, *does know, the hearts of all the children of men.*

*Fourthly*, Another *Cause* of Evil-speaking is *Envy*. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their Reputation obscures *them*, and that their commendable qualities do stand in *their* light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their Virtues may not scorch *them*. This makes them greedily to entertain, and industriously to publish any thing that may serve to that purpose, thereby to raise themselves upon the Ruins of other mens Reputation: And therefore as soon as they have got an ill Report of any good man by the end, to work they presently go to send it abroad by the first *Post:* For the string is always ready upon their Bow to let fly this Arrow with an incredible swiftness, thro' *City* and *Country*; for fear the innocent man's justification should over-take it.

*Fifthly*, Another *Cause* of Evil-speaking is *Impertinence* and *Curiosity*; an itch of talking and medling in the Affairs of other Men, which do no wise concern them. Some persons love to mingle themselves in all business, and are loth to seem ignorant of so important a piece of *News* as the *faults* and *follies* of men, or any bad thing that is talk'd of in good Company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill Stories, as good matter of discourse in the next Company that is worthy of them: And this perhaps not out of any great malice, but for want of something better to talk of, and because their Parts lie chiefly that way.

*Lastly*, Men do this many times out of *wantonness* and for *diversion*. So little do light and vain men consider, that a man's Reputation is too great and tender a Concernment to be jested withal; and that a slanderous Tongue *bites like a Serpent*, and *wounds like a Sword*. For what can be more barbarous, next to sporting with a man's Life, than to play with his Honour and Reputation which to some men is dearer to them than their Lives?

It is a cruel pleasure which some men take in worrying the Reputation of others much better than themselves; and this only to divert themselves and the Company. *Solomon* compares this sort of men to distracted persons; *As a madman*, saith he, *who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*; the LXX. render it, *So is the man that defameth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in sport?* Such, and so bad are the Causes of this Vice. I proceed to consider, in the

*Second*

*Second* place, the ordinary, but very pernicious *Consequences* and *Effects* of it; both to *Others*, and to *our Selves.*

*First*, To *Others*; the Parties I mean that are slandered. To them it is certainly a great *injury*, and commonly a high *Provocation*, but always matter of no small *grief* and *trouble* to them.

It is certainly a great *injury*, and if the evil which we say of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all possible reparation. And tho' we should do our utmost endeavour afterwards towards their Vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; because the Vindication seldom reacheth so far as the Reproach, and because commonly men are neither so forward to spread the Vindication, nor is it so easily received after ill impressions are once made. The solicitous Vindication of a man's self is, at the best, but an *after-game*; and for the most part a man had better sit still, than to run the hazard of making the matter worse by *playing* it.

I will add one thing more, That it is an Injury that descends to a man's Children and Posterity; because the good or ill Name of the Father is deriv'd down to them; and many times the best thing he hath to leave them is the Reputation of his unblemish'd Virtue and Worth: And do we make no Conscience to rob his innocent Children of the best part of this small Patrimony, and of all the kindness that would have been done them for their Fathers sake, if his Reputation had not been so undeservedly stain'd? Is it no Crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blast a man's Reputation, and to ruin his Children, perhaps to all Posterity? Can we make a jest of so serious a matter? Of an Injury so very hard to be repented of as it ought, because in such a Case no Repentance will be acceptable without Restitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this World to make it; and if we do it not, will be our Ruin in the other.

I will put the Case at the best, that the matter of the Slander is true; yet no man's Reputation is considerably stain'd, though never so deservedly, without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter by passing through several hands is aggravated beyond truth, every one out of his bounty being apt to add something to it.

But, besides the *Injury*, it is commonly a very high *Provocation*. And the consequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and desperate Quarrels. This reason the wise Son of *Sirach* gives why we should defame no man: *Whether it be*, says he, *to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and observed thee*; that is, one way or Ecclus. 19. 8, 9.
other it will probably come to his knowledge, *and when the time cometh he will shew his hatred*; that is, he will take the first opportunity to revenge it.

At the best, it is always matter of *Grief* to the person that is defam'd: And *Christianity*, which is the *best natur'd Institution in the World*, forbids us the doing of those things whereby we may *grieve one another*. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there sinks deep into the spirit even of a wise and good man: And the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more sensible is he of this hard usage; because he never treats others so, nor is he conscious to himself that he hath deserved it.

*Secondly*, The *Consequences* of this Vice are as bad or worse to *our selves*. Whoever is wont to speak evil of others, gives a bad character of himself, even to those whom he desires to please; who, if they be wise enough, will conclude that he speaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: And were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themselves, no man could be so blind as not to see this.

And it is very well worthy of our consideration, which our *Saviour* says in
Matth. 7. this very Case, That *with what measure we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again*; and that many times *heaped up*, and *running over*. For there is hardly any thing wherein Mankind do use more strict justice and equality, than *in rendring evil for evil, and railing for railing*.

Nay, Revenge often goes further than words. A reproachful and slanderous Speech hath cost many a man a *Duel*, and in that the loss of his own Life, or the Murther of another, perhaps with the loss of his own Soul: And I have often wonder'd that among *Christians* this matter is no more laid to heart.

And though neither of these great Mischiefs should happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of humane affairs, whose kindness and good will he may come to stand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only consult his own safety and quiet, he ought to refrain from *evil-speaking*.
Psal. 34. 12, 13. *What man is he*, saith the *Psalmist*, *that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good: Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking falshood.*

But there is an infinitely greater Danger hanging over us from God. If we allow our selves in this evil practice, all our Religion is good for nothing.
James 1. 26. So St. *James* expresly tells us, *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.* And St. *Paul* puts *Slanderers* and *Revilers* amongst those that *shall not*
1 Cor. 6. 10. *inherit the Kingdom of God.* And our *Blessed Saviour* hath told us, That *by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned.* To which I will add the counsel given us by the *Wise man*, *Refrain your tongue from*
Wisdom of Solomon, c. 1. v. 11. *back-biting, for there is no word so secret that shall go for nought, and the mouth that slandereth slayeth the Soul.* I proceed in the

IV^th^ place, to add *some further Arguments and Considerations to take men off from this Vice:* As,

*First*, That the use of *Speech* is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and bestowed upon him for some excellent end and purpose: That by this *Faculty* we might communicate our thoughts more easily to one another, and consult together for our mutual comfort and benefit: Not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The *Psalmist*, as by *Interpreters* is generally thought, calls our *Tongue* our *Glory*; therewith we *praise God* and *bless Men.* Now to *bless* is to speak well of any, and to wish them well. So that we pervert the use of *Speech* and turn our *glory* into shame, when we abuse this *Faculty* to the injury and reproach of any.

*Secondly*, Consider how cheap a kindness it is to speak well, at least not to speak ill of any. A good word is an easie obligation, but not to speak ill requires only our Silence, which costs us nothing. Some instances of Charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and necessities of others: The expence deters many from this kind of Charity. But were a man never so covetous, he might afford another man his good word; at least he might refrain from speaking ill of him: especially if it be consider'd how dear many have paid for a slanderous and reproachful word.

*Thirdly*, Consider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this Vice. Every one desires such a man's friendship, and is apt to repose a great trust and confidence in him: And when he is dead, men will praise him; and next to Piety towards God, and Righteousness to Men, nothing is thought a more significant commendation,

mendation, than that he was never, or very rarely heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular Character of a *Roman Gentleman*, *Neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere, He knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.*

*Fourthly*, Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider how himſelf is apt to be affected with this uſage. Speak thy Conſcience *Man*, and ſay whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldſt not be glad to have every man's, eſpecially every good man's good word? And to have thy faults conceal'd and not to be hardly ſpoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by thoſe whom thou didſt never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reaſon doſt thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been ſo contrary? Nothing ſurely is more equal and reaſonable than that known *Rule*, *What thou wouldſt have no man do to thee, that do thou to no man.*

*Fifthly*, When you are going to ſpeak reproachfully of others, conſider whether you do not lye open to juſt reproach in the ſame, or ſome other kind. Therefore give no Occaſion, no Example of this barbarous uſage of one another.

There are very few ſo innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other; even the wiſeſt, and moſt virtuous, and moſt perfect among men have ſome little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the raillery of a mimical and malicious Wit: Therefore we ſhould often turn our thoughts upon our ſelves, and look into that part of the *Wallet* which men commonly fling over their ſhoulders and keep behind them, that they may not ſee their own Faults: And when we have ſearched that well, let us remember our *Saviour*'s *Rule*, *He that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.*

*Laſtly* conſider, That it is in many Caſes as great a Charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great neceſſity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not beſtow a ſmall Alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent Advice which the Son of *Sirach* gives to this purpoſe; *Talk not of other mens lives: If thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burſt thee.* I ſhall in the Ecclus. 19. 10

V^th^ and *laſt* place, *give ſome Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.* V.

Firſt, *Never ſay any evil of any man, but what you certainly know.* Whenever you poſitively accuſe and *endite* any man of any *Crime*, though it be in private and among Friends, ſpeak as if you were upon your *Oath*, becauſe God ſees and hears you. This not only Charity, but Juſtice and regard to Truth do demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill Report is almoſt as faulty as the firſt inventer of it. For though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a *Lie.* Therefore never ſpeak evil of any upon *common Fame*, which for the moſt part is falſe, but almoſt always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in moſt Caſes, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be ſo: But if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abſtain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with ſome Perſons, and to gain this point of them however; becauſe it would retrench *nine* parts in *ten* of the *evil-ſpeaking* that is in the World.

*Secondly*, Before you ſpeak evil of any man, conſider whether he hath not obliged you by ſome real kindneſs, and then it is a bad return to ſpeak ill of him who hath done us good. Conſider alſo, whether you may not come

hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be ashamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reason also to believe that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Consider likewise, whether in the change of humane Affairs, you may not some time or other come to stand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a spiteful and needless word by a shrewd turn? So that if a man made no conscience of hurting others, yet he should in prudence have some consideration of himself.

*Thirdly*, Let us accustom our selves to pity the Faults of men, and to be truly sorry for them, and then we shall take no pleasure in publishing them. And this common Humanity requires of us, considering the great infirmities of humane Nature, and that we our selves also are liable to be tempted: Considering likewise, how severe a Punishment every Fault and Miscarriage is to it self; and how terribly it exposeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this World and the other. He is not a good *Christian*, that is not heartily sorry for the faults even of his greatest Enemies; and if he be so, he will discover them no further than is necessary to some good end.

*Fourthly*, Whenever we hear any man evil spoken of, if we know any good of him let us say *that*. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to stand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuse and bespatter them. Possibly the good you may have heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: However, it is better to preserve the credit of a bad man, than to stain the reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man should be evil spoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad Qualities should be mention'd together; otherwise he may be strangely misrepresented, and an indifferent Man may be made a Monster.

They that will observe nothing in a Wise Man, but his over-sights and follies; nothing in a Good Man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a shift to render a very wise and good man very despicable. If one should heap together all the passionate Speeches, all the froward and imprudent Actions of the best Man; all that he had said or done amiss in his whole Life, and present it all at one view, concealing his Wisdom and Vertues; the Man in this Disguise would look like a *Mad-man* or a *Fury*: And yet if his Life were fairly represented, and just in the same manner it was led; and his many and great Virtues set over against his Failings and Infirmities, he would appear to all the World to be an admirable and excellent Person. But how many and great soever any man's ill Qualities are, it is but just that with all this heavy load of Faults he should have the due Praise of the few real Virtues that are in him.

*Fifthly*, That you may not speak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to *busie-bodies*, and those that love to talk of other men's Faults: Or if you cannot decently reprove them because of their Quality, then divert the Discourse some other way; or if you cannot do that, by seeming not to mind it, you may sufficiently signifie that you do not like it.

*Sixthly*, Let every man mind himself, and his own Duty and Concernment. Do but endeavour in good earnest to mend thy self, and it will be work enough for one Man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionysius*, who would fain have

had a famous *Philoſopher* for his Flatterer, they parted in ſome unkindneſs, and *Dionyſius* bade him not to ſpeak ill of him when he was return'd in to *Greece*; *Plato* told him, *he had no leiſure for it*; meaning that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the Faults of ſo bad a man, ſo notoriouſly known to all the World.

*Laſtly*, Let us ſet a watch before the door of our lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration: I do not mean to ſpeak *finely*, but *fitly*. Eſpecially when thou ſpeakeſt of others, conſider of *whom*, and *what* thou art going to ſpeak: Uſe great Caution and Circumſpection in this matter: Look well about thee; on every ſide of the thing, and on every perſon in the Company, before thy words ſlip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men ſhould be ſullen in company, and ſay nothing; or ſo ſtiff in Converſation, as to drop nothing but *Aphoriſms* and *Oracles*: Eſpecially among Equals and Friends, we ſhould not be ſo reſerved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchſafe to ſay any thing. If a Man had the underſtanding of an *Angel*, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of this exceſs of *Wiſdom*, for fear of being thought *Cunning*. The true Art of Converſation, if any body can hit upon it, ſeems to be this; an appearing freedom and openneſs, with a reſolute reſervedneſs as little appearing as is poſſible.

All that I mean by this *Caution* is, that we ſhould conſider well what we ſay, eſpecially of others. And to this end we ſhould endeavour to get our Minds furniſhed with matter of Diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others: And, If we have but a Mind wiſe enough, and good enough, we may eaſily find a Field large enough for innocent Converſation; ſuch as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiſer part of Mankind: And why ſhould any one be at the coſt of playing the fool to gratifie any body whatſoever?

I have done with the *Five* things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument. But becauſe hardly any thing can be ſo clear, but ſomething may be ſaid againſt it; nor any thing ſo bad, but ſomething may be pleaded in excuſe for it: I ſhall therefore take notice of two or three *Pleas* that may be made for it.

*Firſt*, Some pretend mighty Injury and Provocation. If in the ſame kind, it ſeems thou art ſenſible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughteſt to abſtain from it: But in what kind ſoever it be, the Chriſtian Religion forbids Revenge. Therefore do not plead one Sin in excuſe of another, and make *Revenge* an Apology for *Reviling*.

*Secondly*, It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this Doctrine were practiſed, Converſation would be ſpoil'd, and there would not be matter enough for pleaſant Diſcourſe and Entertainment.

I anſwer, The deſign of this Diſcourſe is to redreſs a great evil in Converſation, and that I hope which mends it will not ſpoil it. And however, if men's Tongues lay a little more ſtill, and moſt of us ſpake a good deal leſs than we do, both of our ſelves and others, I ſee no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and ſee many good days. *David*, I am ſure, preſcribes it as an excellent *Receipt*, in his Opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long Life, to refrain from evil-ſpeaking; *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.* Pſal. 34. 12, 13.

But

But granting that there is some pleasure in *Invective*, I hope there is a great deal more in *Innocence*: And the more any man considers this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are serious, we our selves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himself impartially before the *Sacrament*, or is put in mind upon a *Death-bed* to make reparation for Injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wish he had not done them. For this certainly is one necessary qualification for the *Blessed Sacrament*, that we *be in love and charity with our neighbours*; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconsistent.

*Thirdly*, There is yet a more specious *Plea* than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can escape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this Doctrine did effectually take place: Because by this means one great restraint from doing evil would be taken away, which these good men, who are so bent upon reforming the World, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the displeasure of God, will yet abstain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from Men: Besides, that this seems the most proper punishment of many Faults which the Laws of Men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not seem so good and laudable a way to punish one Fault by another: But let no man encourage himself in an evil way with this hope, that he shall escape the Censure of men: When I have said all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-speaking enough in the World to chastise them that do ill: And though we should hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil doings. I wish we could but be perswaded to make the Experiment for a little while, whether men would not be sufficiently lash'd for their Faults, though we sate by and said nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good Men should be concern'd in this odious Work. There will always be Offenders and *Malefactors* enow to be the *Executioners* to inflict this punishment upon one another. Therefore let no man presume upon Impunity on the one hand; and on the other, let no man despair but that this business will be sufficiently done one way or other. I am very much mistaken, if we may not safely trust an ill-natur'd World that there will be no failure of Justice in this kind.

And here, if I durst, I would have said a word or two concerning that more publick sort of *Obloquy* by *Lampoons* and *Libels*, so much in fashion in this witty Age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible sort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be said without offence, that how much soever men are pleas'd to see others abused in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn: However I cannot but hope that every man that impartially considers, must own it to be a Fault of a very high nature, to revile those whom God hath placed in Authority over us, and *to slander the footsteps of the Lord's Anointed*: Especially since it is so expresly written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the Rulers of thy People.*

Having represented the great Evil of this Vice, it might not now be improper to say something to those who suffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil said of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occasions for the future; and so turn the malice of our Enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making so good an use of it: And then it will be well for us to have been evil spoken of.

Are we innocent? We may so much the better bear it patiently: imitating herein the Pattern of our *Blessed Saviour*, *Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

We

We may consider likewise, that though it be a misfortune to be evil-spoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore should not put us into Passion, because another man's being injurious to me is no good reason why I should be uneasie to my self. We should not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much less upon our selves. Let no man's Provocation make thee to lose thy Patience. Be not such a fool, as to part with any one Virtue, because some men are so malicious as to endeavour to rob thee of the Reputation of all the rest. When men speak ill of thee, do as *Plato* said he would do in that case, *Live so, as that no body may believe them.*

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been said, and to urge you and my self to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practise what we so plainly see to be our Duty. Many are so taken up with the deep *Points* and *Mysteries* of Religion, that they never think of the common *Duties* and *Offices* of humane Life. But *Faith* and a *good Life* are so far from clashing with one another, that the *Christian Religion* hath made them inseparable. True *Faith* is necessary in order to a *good Life*, and a *good Life* is the genuine product of a *right Belief*; and therefore the *one* never ought to be press'd to the prejudice of the *other*.

I foresee what will be said, because I have heard it so often said in the like case; that there is *not one word of Jesus Christ in all this*. No more is there in the *Text*. And yet I hope that *Jesus Christ* is truly preach'd, whenever his *Will* and *Laws*, and the *Duties* injoyn'd by the *Christian Religion*, are inculcated upon us.

But some men are pleased to say, that *this is mere Morality*: I answer, that this is *Scripture Morality* and *Christian Morality*, and who hath any thing to say against *that*? Nay, I will go yet further, that no man ought to pretend to believe the *Christian Religion*, who lives in the neglect of so plain a *Duty*; and in the practice of a *Sin* so clearly condemned by it, as this of *evil-speaking* is.

But because *the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged Sword*, yea sharper than *Calumny* it self; and pierceth the very Hearts and Consciences of men, laying us open to our selves, and convincing us of our more secret as well as our more visible Faults; I shall therefore at one view represent to you what is dispersedly said concerning this *Sin* in the *Holy Word of God*.

And I have purposely reserved this to the last, because it is more perswasive and penetrating than any Humane Discourse. And to this end be pleased to consider in what company the *Holy Ghost* doth usually mention this *Sin*. There is scarce any *black Catalogue* of *Sins* in the *Bible* but we find this among them; in the company of the very worst *Actions* and most irregular *Passions* of men. *Out of the heart*, says our *Saviour*, *proceed evil thoughts*, Matth 15. 19.
*murders, adulteries, fornications, false-witness, evil-speakings.* And the *Apostle* ranks *back biters* with *fornicators*, and *murderers*, and *haters of God*; and Rom. 1. 29.
with those of whom it is expresly said that *they shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. 6. 10.

And when he enumerates the Sins of *the last times*, *Men*, says he, *shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, evil-speakers, without natural affection, perfidious, false-accusers*, &c. And which is the strangest of all, they who are said to be guilty of these great Vices and Enormities are noted by the *Apostle* to be great pretenders to Religion; for so it follows in the next words, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new 2 Tim. 3. 2, 3.

thing

thing for men to make a more than ordinary profession of *Christianity*, and yet at the same time to live in a most palpable contradiction to the Precepts of that *Holy Religion:* As if any pretence to *Mystery* and I know not what extraordinary *attainments* in the knowledge of *Christ*, could exempt men from obedience to his Laws, and set them above the Virtues of a good Life.

And now after all this, do we hardly think *that* to be a Sin, which is in *Scripture* so frequently rank'd with *Murther* and *Adultery* and the *blackest Crimes*; such as are inconsistent with the life and power of Religion, and will certainly shut men out of the Kingdom of God? Do we believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God?* and can we allow our selves in the common practice of a *Sin*, than which there is hardly any Fault of mens Lives more frequently mention'd, more severely reprov'd, and more odiously brand'd in that *Holy Book?*

Consider seriously these Texts: *Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle, who shall* Psal. 15. 1. *dwell in thy holy Hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.* Have ye never heard what our *Saviour* says, that *of every idle word we must give an account in the Day of Judgment*; that *by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd?* What can be more severe than that of St. *James?* *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's Religion is vain.*

To conclude: The *Sin*, which I have now warned men against, is plainly condemn'd by the *Word of God*; and the *Duty* which I have now been perswading you to, is easie for every man to understand, not hard for any man, that can but resolve to keep a good guard upon himself for some time, by the grace of God to practise; and most reasonable for all *Men*, but especially for all *Christians*, to observe. It is as easie as a *resolute silence* upon just occasion, as reasonable as *prudence* and *justice* and *charity*, and the preservation of *peace* and *good will* among men, can make it; and of as necessary and indispensible an obligation, as the Authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which Considerations let every one of us be perswaded to take up *David's* deliberate Resolution, *I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I* Psal. 39. 1. *offend not with my tongue.* And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one Fault, we should soon be better Men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this *Vice*, together with those that are nearly allied to it, and may at the same time, and almost with the same resolution and care be corrected, would make us Owners of a great many considerable Virtues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it being hardly to be imagin'd that a man that makes conscience of his *Words* should not take an equal or a greater care of his *Actions*. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reason of that saying of St. *James*, and with which I shall conclude: *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.*

*Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, to do his will; working in you always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ;* To whom be glory for ever, *Amen.*

SERMON

CONCERNING

The Divinity and Incarnation

OF OUR

# BLESSED SAVIOUR.

AN

# Advertiſement

TO THE

# READER.

THE *following* Sermons *were preached ſeveral years ago, in the Church of* St. Lawrence-Jewry *in* London; *and being now reviſed and enlarged by the* Author *are here made publick. The true Reaſon whereof, was not that which is commonly alledged for Printing Books, the Importunity of* Friends; *but the importunate Clamours and malicious Calumnies of* Others, *whom the* Author *heartily prays God to forgive, and to give them better Minds: And to grant that the enſuing Diſcourſes, the Publication whereof was in ſo great a degree neceſſary, may by his Bleſſing prove in ſome meaſure uſeful.*

SERMON

# SERMON XLIII.

## Concerning the Divinity of our B. Saviour.

Preached in the

Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *Decemb.* the 30th. 1679.

### John I. 14.

*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*



THESE words contain in them three great Points concerning our B. *Saviour*, the Author and Founder of our Faith and Religion.

*First*, His Incarnation, *the Word was made*, or became, *flesh*.

*Secondly*, His Life and Conversation here among us, *and dwelt amongst us*; ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he pitched his Tabernacle amongst us; he lived here below in this World, and for a time made his residence and abode with us.

*Thirdly*, That in this state of his Humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his Divinity; whilst he appeared as a *Man* and liv'd amongst us, there were great and glorious Testimonies given of him that he was the *Son of God*: and that in so peculiar a manner as no Creature can be said to be: *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, &c.

I shall begin with the *First* of these, his *Incarnation*; as most proper for this Solemn Time, which hath for many Ages been set apart for the commemoration of the Nativity and Incarnation of our B. *Saviour*. *The Word was made flesh*, that is, he who is personally called the *Word*, and whom the *Evangelist* St. *John* had so fully described in the beginning of this *Gospel*, he became flesh, that is, assumed our Nature and became Man; for so the word *flesh* is frequently used in Scripture for *Man* or humane nature, *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come*, that is, to thee shall *all men* addrefs their Supplications: again, *The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together*, that is, *all men* shall behold and acknowledge it; and then it follows, *all flesh is grass*, speaking of the frailty and mortality of *Man*: And so likewise in the *New Testament*, our B. *Saviour* foretelling the misery that was coming upon the *Jewish* Nation, says, *Except those days should be shortned no flesh should be saved*, that is, *no man* should escape and survive that great calamity and destruction which was coming upon them: *By the works of the Law*, says the *Apostle shall no flesh*, that is, no man *be justified*.

Psal. 65. 2.

Isa. 40. 5, 6.

Matt. 24. 22.

Gal. 2. 16.

So that by the *Word's* being *made* or becoming *flesh*, the *Evangelist* did not intend that he assumed only a humane Body without a Soul, and was

united only to a humane Body, which was the Heresie of *Apollinaris* and his Followers, but that he became *Man*, that is, assumed the whole humane Nature, Body and Soul. And it is likewise very probable that the *Evangelist* did purposely chuse the word *flesh*, which signifies the frail and mortal part of Man, to denote to us that the Son of God did assume our Nature with all its infirmities, and became subject to the common frailty and mortality of human Nature.

The words thus explain'd contain that *great Mystery of Godliness*, as the *Apostle* calls it, or of the *Christian* Religion, *viz.* the Incarnation of the Son of God, which St. *Paul* expresseth by the appearance or manifestation of God in the flesh, *And without controversie great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifested in the flesh*, that is, he appeared in human Nature, he became Man; or, as St. *John* expresseth it in the Text, *The Word was made flesh.* 1 Tim. 3. 16.

But for the more clear and full explication of these words, we will consider these two things.

*First*, the Person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be Incarnate, or to be *made flesh*, namely *the Word*.

*Secondly*, the Mystery it self, or the nature of this Incarnation, so far as the Scripture hath revealed and declared it to us.

I. I. We will consider the Person that is here spoken of, and who is said to be Incarnate or to be *made flesh*, and who is so frequently in this *Chapter* called by the Name or Title of *the Word*; namely the eternal and only begotten Son of God; for so we find him described in the Text, *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, &c. that is, such as became so great and glorious a Person as deserves the Title of *the only begotten Son of God.*

For the explaining of this Name or Title of the *Word* given by St. *John* to our B. *Saviour*, we will consider these two things.

*First*, The reason of this Name or Title of the *Word*, and what probably might be the Occasion why this *Evangelist* insists so much upon it, and makes so frequent mention of it.

*Secondly*, The Description it self, which is given of him under this Name or Title of the *Word* by this *Evangelist*, in his entrance into his History of the Gospel.

1. We will enquire into the Reason of this Name or Title of the *Word*, which is here given to our B. *Saviour* by this *Evangelist:* And what might probably be the Occasion why he insists so much upon it and makes so frequent mention of it. I shall consider these two things distinctly and severally.

*First*, *The Reason of this Name or Title of the Word, here given by the* Evangelist *to our* B. Saviour. And he seems to have done it in compliance with the common way of speaking among the *Jews*, who frequently call the *Messias* by the Name of *the Word of the Lord*; of which I might give many instances: But there is one very remarkable, in the *Targum* of *Jonathan*, which renders these words of the *Psalmist*, which the *Jews* acknowledge to be spoken of the *Messias*, *viz. The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand*, &c. I say it renders them thus, *The Lord said unto his* Word, *sit thou on my right hand*, &c. And so likewise *Philo* the *Jew* calls him *by whom God made the World*, *the Word of God*, and *the Son of God.* And *Plato* probably had the same Notion from the *Jews*, which made *Amelius* the

*Platonist*,

*Platonist*, when he read the beginning of St. *John*'s Gospel, to say, *this* Barbarian *agrees with Plato, ranking the* Word *in the order of Principles*; meaning that he made the *Word* the *Principle* or efficient Cause of the World, as *Plato* also hath done.

And this Title of the *Word* was so famously known to be given to the *Messias*, that even the Enemies of *Christianity* took notice of it. *Julian* the *Apostate* calls *Christ* by this Name: And *Mahomet* in his *Alchoran* gives this Name of the *Word* to *Jesus the Son of Mary*. But St. *John* had probably no reference to *Plato* any otherwise than as the *Gnosticks*, against whom he wrote, made use of several of *Plato's* words and notions. So that in all probability St. *John* gives our *B. Saviour* this Title with regard to the *Jews* more especially, who anciently call'd the *Messias* by this Name.

*Secondly*, We will in the next place consider, *What might probably be the Occasion why this* Evangelist *makes so frequent mention of this Title of the* Word, *and insists so much upon it.* And it seems to be this: Nay, I think that hardly any doubt can be made of it, since the most ancient of the *Fathers*, who lived nearest the time of St. *John*, do confirm it to us.

St. *John*, who survived all the Apostles, liv'd to see those *Heresies* which sprang up in the beginnings of *Christianity*, during the lives of the *Apostles* grown up to a great height, to the great prejudice and disturbance of the *Christian* Religion; I mean the Heresies of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*, and the several *Sects* of the *Gnosticks* which began from *Simon Magus*, and were continued and carried on by *Valentinus* and *Basilides*, *Carpocrates* and *Menander*: Some of which expresly deny'd the Divinity of our *Saviour*, asserting him to have been a mere man, and to have had no manner of existence before he was born of the *B. Virgin*, as *Eusebius* and *Epiphanius* tell us particularly concerning *Ebion*: Which those who hold the same Opinion now in our days may do well to consider from whence it had its Original.

Others of them, I still mean the *Gnosticks*, had corrupted the simplicity of the *Christian* Doctrine by mingling with it the fancies and conceits of the *Jewish Cabbalists*, and of the *Schools* of *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, and of the *Chaldæan* Philosophy more ancient than either; as may be seen in *Eusebius de Præparat. Evan.* and by jumbling all these together they had framed a confused *Genealogy* of *Deities*, which they call by several glorious Names, and all of them by the general Name of *Æons* or *Ages*: Among which they reckon'd Ζωὴ & λόγος & Μονογενὴς & Πλήρωμα, that is, the *Life*, and the *Word*, and the *Only begotten*, and the *Fulness*, and many other Divine *Powers* and *Emanations* which they fancied to be successively derived from one another.

And they also distinguished between the *Maker of the World* whom they called the *God* of the *Old Testament*, and the *God* of the *New*: And between *Jesus* and *Christ*. *Jesus* according to the Doctrine of *Cerinthus*, as *Irenæus* tells us, being the Man that was born of the Virgin, and *Christ* or the *Messias* being that *Divine Power* or *Spirit* which afterwards descended into *Jesus* and dwelt in him.

If it were possible, yet it would be to no purpose, to go about to reconcile these wild conceits with one another; and to find out for what reason they were invented, unless it were to amuse the People with these *high swelling words of vanity* and a pretence of *knowledge falsly so called*, as the *Apostle* speaks in allusion to the Name of *Gnosticks*, that is to say, *the Men of knowledge*, which they proudly assum'd to themselves, as if the knowledge of Mysteries of a more sublime nature did peculiarly belong to them.

In opposition to all these vain and groundless conceits, St. *John* in the beginning of his *Gospel* chuses to speak of our *B. Saviour*, the History of whose Life and Death he was going to write, by the Name or Title of the *Word*, a *term* very famous among those *Sects:* And shews that this *Word of God*, which was also the Title the *Jews* anciently gave to the *Messias*, did exist before he assumed a human Nature, and even from all Eternity; And that to this eternal *Word* did truly belong all those Titles which they kept such a canting stir about, and which they did with so much senseless nicety and subtilty distinguish from one another, as if they had been so many several *Emanations* from the *Deity:* And he shews that this *Word of God*, was really and truly the *Life*, and the *Light*, and the *Fulness*, and the *only begotten of the Father*; v. 5. *In him was the* Life, *and the* Life *was the* Light of Men; and v. 6. *And the* Light *shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not:* and v. 7, 8, 9. where the *Evangelist* speaking of *John* the *Baptist* says of him, that *he came for a witness, to bear witness of the* Light; and that *he was not that* Light, *but was sent to bear witness of that* Light: *And that* Light *was the true* Light *which coming into the World enlightens every man:* And v. 14. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the* only begotten of the Father, full *of grace and truth:* And v. 16. *And of his fulness we all receive*, &c. You see here is a perpetual Allusion to the glorious Titles which they gave to their *Æons* as if they had been so many several *Deities*.

In short, the *Evangelist* shews that all this fanciful *Genealogy* of *Divine Emanations*, with which the *Gnosticks* made so great a noise, was mere conceit and imagination; and that all these glorious Titles did really meet in the *Messias* who is the *Word*, and who before his Incarnation was from all eternity with *God*, partaker of his Divine Nature and Glory.

I have declared this the more fully and particularly, because the knowledge of it seems to me to be the only true Key to the Interpretation of this Discourse of St. *John* concerning our *Saviour* under the Name and Title of the *Word*. And surely it is a quite wrong way for any Man to go about by the mere strength and subtilty of his Reason and Wit, though never so great, to interpret an ancient Book, without understanding and considering the Historical occasion of it, which is the only thing that can give true light to it.

And this was the great and fatal mistake of *Socinus*, to go to interpret Scripture merely by Criticising upon words, and searching into all the senses that they are possibly capable of, till he can find one, though never so forc'd and foreign, that will save harmless the Opinion which he was beforehand resolved to maintain even against the most natural and obvious sense of the Text which he undertakes to interpret: Just as if a Man should interpret ancient *Statutes* and *Records* by mere Critical skill in words, without regard to the true Occasion upon which they were made, and without any manner of knowledge and insight into the History of the Age in which they were written.

I shall now proceed to the Second thing which I proposed to consider, namely,

II. *The Description here given of the* Word *by this* Evangelist *in his entrance into his History of the Gospel. In the beginning*, says he, *was the* Word, *and the* Word *was with God, and the* Word *was God: The same was in the beginning with God: All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

In

In which Passage of the *Evangelist* four things are said of the *Word* which will require a more particular Explication.

*First*, That *he was in the beginning.*
*Secondly*, That *he was in the beginning with God.*
*Thirdly*, That *he was God.*
*Fourthly*, That *all were made by him.*

1*st*. That *he was in the beginning*, ἐν ἀρχῇ, which is the same with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς *from the beginning*, where speaking of *Christ* by the name of *eternal life*, and of the *Word of life*, *That*, says he, *which was from the beginning.* John 1. 1 *Nonnus*, the ancient *Paraphrast* of St. *John*'s Gospel, by way of explication of what is meant by his being *in the beginning*, adds, that he was ἄχρονος, *without time*, that is, before all time; and if so, then he was from all eternity: *In the beginning was the Word*, that is, when things *began to be made* he was; not *then* began to be, but *then* already was, and did exist before any thing was made and consequently is without beginning, for that which was never made could have no beginning of its Being: and so the *Jews* used to describe *Eternity*, *before the World was*, and *before the foundation of the World*, as also in several places of the *New Testament*. And so likewise *Solomon* describes the Eternity of *Wisdom*, *The Lord*, says he, *possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old: I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the Earth was: When he prepared the Heaven I was there; then I was with him as one brought up with him, rejoycing always before him:* Prov. 8. 22, 23, &c. And so *Justin Martyr* explains this very expression of St. *John*, that he was, or had a Being before all Ages: So likewise *Athenagoras*, a most ancient *Christian* Writer, *God*, says he, *who is an invisible Mind, had from the beginning the* Word *in himself.*

2*ly*. That *in the beginning the Word was with God:* And so *Solomon*, when he would express the Eternity of *Wisdom* says, *it was with God*. And so likewise the Son of *Sirach* speaking of *Wisdom*, says, it was μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ *with God*; And so the ancient *Jews* often called the *Word of God*, the *Word which is before the Lord*, that is, with him, or in his presence: In like manner the *Evangelist* says here, that the *Word was with God*, that is, it was always together with him, partaking of his Happiness and Glory: To which our *Saviour* refers in his Prayer, *Glorifie me with thine one self with the glory which I had with thee before the World was.* John 17. 5. And this *being with God* the *Evangelist* opposeth to his *appearing* and *being manifested* to the World, *v.* 10. *He was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not*; that is, he who from all eternity *was with God*, appeared in the World, and when he did so, though he had made the World, yet the World would not own him. And this opposition between his *being with God* and his *being manifested* in the World, the same St. *John* mentions elsewhere, *I shew unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.* 1 John 1, 2

3*ly*. That *he was God:* And so *Justin Martyr* says of him, That *he was God before the World*, that is, from all eternity: But then the *Evangelist* adds by way of Explication, *the same was in the beginning with God*, that is, tho' the *Word* was truly and really God, yet he was not *God the Father*, who is the Fountain of the Deity, but an Emanation from him, the only begotten Son of God, from all eternity *with him*; to denote to us, that which is commonly called by *Divines*, and for any thing I could ever see properly enough, *the distinction of Persons* in the Deity; at least we know not a fitter word whereby to express that great Mystery.

4*thly*,

*4thly*, That *all things were made by him.* This seems to refer to the description which *Moses* makes of the Creation, where God is represented creating things by his *Word*; *God said, Let there be light, and there was light:* And so likewise the *Psalmist*, *By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Host of them by the breath of his mouth:* And so St *Peter* also expresseth the Creation of the World, *By the Word of the Lord the Heavens were of old, and the Earth made out of Water:* And in the ancient Books of the *Chaldeans* and the verses ascribed to *Orpheus*, the *Maker of the World* is called the *Word*, and the *Divine Word:* And so *Tertullian* tells the *Pagans*, that by their *Philosophers* the *Maker of the World was called* λόγος, the *Word*, or *Reason:* And *Philo* the *Jew* following *Plato*, who himself most probably had it from the *Jews*, says, that the World was created by the *Word*; whom he calls the *Name of God*, and the *Image of God*, and the *Son of God: two* of which glorious Titles are ascribed to him, together with *that* of *Maker of the* World, by the Author of the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*; *In these last days*, says he, *God hath spoken to us by his Son, by whom also he made the Worlds: Who is the brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his person:* And to the same purpose St. *Paul*, speaking of *Christ*, calls him *the Image of the invisible God, the first born of every Creature*, that is, born before any thing was created, as does evidently follow from the Reason given in the next words why he call'd him the *first born of every Creature, for by him were all things created that are in Heaven and in Earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things subsist:* From whence it is plain, that by his being *the first-born of every Creature* thus much at least is to be understood, that he was before all Creatures, and therefore he himself cannot be a Creature, unless he could be before himself: Nay the *Apostle* says it expresly in this very Text in which he is called the *first-born of every Creature*, or *of the whole Creation*, that *he is before all things*, that is, he had a Being before there was any created Being, he was before all Creatures both in Duration and in Dignity; for so must he of necessity be, if *all things were made by him*; for as the Maker is always before the thing which is made, so is he also better and of greater Dignity.

Gen. 1. Psal. 33. 6. 2 Pet. 3. 5. Colos. 1. 15, 16, 17.

And yet I must acknowledge, that there seems to be no small difficulty in the Interpretation I have given of this expression in which *Christ* is said by the *Apostle* to be *the first-born of every Creature*, or of the whole Creation; because in strictness of speech the *first-born* is of the same Nature with those in respect of whom he is said to be the *first-born:* And if so, then he must be a Creature as well as those in respect of whom he is said to be the *first-born:* This is the Objection in its full strength, and I do own it to have a very plausible appearance: And yet I hope before I have done, to satisfie any one that will consider things impartially and without prejudice, and will duly attend to the scope of the *Apostle*'s reasoning in this *Text*, and compare it with other parallel places of the *New Testament*, that it neither is, nor can be the *Apostle*'s meaning in affirming *Christ* to be the *first-born of every Creature* to insinuate that the *Son of God* is a *Creature*.

For how can this possibly agree with that which follows and is given as the Reason why *Christ* is said to be the *first-born of every Creature?* namely, because *all things were made by him:* The *Apostle*'s words are these, *the first-born of every Creature*, or *of the whole Creation, for by him all things were created:* But now, according to the *Socinian* interpretation, this would be a Reason just the contrary way: For if *all things were created by him*, then he himself is not a *Creature*.

So that the *Apostle*'s meaning in this expression must either be that the *Son*

*of God*, our *B. Saviour* was before all Creatures, as it is said presently after that *he is before all things*; and then the Reason which is added will be very proper and pertinent, *he is before all things* because *all things were created by him*: In which sense it is very probable that the *Son* of God elsewhere calls himself *the beginning of the Creation of God*, meaning by it, as the *Philosophers* most frequently use the word ἀρχὴ, the *Principle* or *Efficient* Cause of the Creation: And so we find the same word, which our *Translation* renders *the beginning*, used together with the word *first-born*, as if they were of the same importance; *the beginning and first-born from the dead*, that is, the *Principle and Efficient* Cause of the Resurrection of the Dead. Rev. 3. 14 Col. 1. 18

Or else, which seems to me to be the most probable, and indeed the true meaning of the Expression, by this Title of *the first-born of every Creature*, the *Apostle* means, that he was *Lord* and *Heir* of the *Creation*: For the *first-born* is natural *Heir*, and *Justinian* tells us, that *Heir* did anciently signifie *Lord*: And therefore the Scripture uses these *terms* promiscuously, and as if they were equivalent; for whereas St. *Peter* saith of *Jesus Christ*, that *he is Lord of all*, St. *Paul* calls him *Heir of all things*: And then the Reason given by the *Apostle* why he calls him *the first-born of every Creature* will be very fit and proper, because *all things were Created by him*: For well may he be said to be *Lord* and *Heir* of the Creation who *made all things that were made*, *and without whom was not any thing made that was made*. Acts 10. 36 Rom. 4. 13

And this will yet appear much more evident, if we consider, that the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, (who, by several of the *Ancients*, was thought to be St. *Paul*, where he gives to *Christ* some of the very same Titles which St. *Paul* in his *Epistle* to the *Colossians* had done, calling him, the *Image of God*, and the *Maker of the World*) does instead of the Title of the *first born of every Creature*, call him *the Heir of all things*; and then adds, as the Reason of this Title, that *by* him God made the Worlds; *God*, says he, *hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*, *whom he hath constituted Heir of all things*: *Who being the brightness of his glory*, *and the express Image of his person*, *and upholding all things by the Word of his power*, &c. Which is exactly parallel with that passage of St. *Paul* to the *Colossians*, where *Christ* is call'd *the Image of the invisible God*, and where it is likewise said of him, that *he made all things*, and that *by him all things do subsist*, which the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, in different words, but to the very same sense, expresseth by his *upholding all things by the Word of his power*; that is, by the same *powerful Word* by which all things at first were made: But then instead of calling him *the first-born of every Creature*, because *all things were made by him*, he calls him the *Heir of all things*, *by whom God also made the Worlds*.

And indeed that expression of *the first-born of every Creature* cannot admit of any other sense which will agree so well with the Reason that follows as the sense which I have mentioned; namely, that he is therefore *Heir and Lord of the whole Creation*, because *all Creatures were made* by him; which exactly answers those words of the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, *whom he hath constituted Heir of all things*, *by whom also he made the Worlds*.

And now I appeal to any sober and considerate Man, whether the Interpretation which I have given of that expression of the *first-born of every Creature* be not much more agreeable both to the tenour of the Scripture, and to the plain scope and design of the *Apostle*'s Argument and Reasoning in that Text.

I have insisted the longer upon this, because it is the great Text upon which the *Arians* lay the main strength and stress of their Opinion that the Son of God is a Creature, because he is said by the *Apostle* to be *the first-*

*born of every Creature*; by which expression if no more be meant than that he is *Heir* and *Lord* of the whole Creation, which I have shewed to be very agreeable both to the use of the word *first born* among the *Hebrews*, and likewise to the description given of Christ in that parallel Text which I cited out of the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, then this expression of *the first born of every Creature* is nothing at all to the purpose either of the *Arians* or the *Socinians*, to prove the Son of God to be a Creature: Besides, that the Interpretation which I have given of it makes the *Apostle's* sense much more current and easie; for then the Text will run thus, who *is the Image of the invisible God, Heir and Lord of the whole Creation, for by him all things were made.*

So that in these *four* expressions of the *Evangelist* which I have explain'd there are these *four* things distinctly affirmed of the *Word.*

*First*, That *he was in the beginning*, that is, that he already was and did exist when things began to be created: He was before any thing was made, and consequently is without any beginning of Time; for that which was never made could have no beginning of its Being.

*Secondly*, That in that state of his existence before the Creation of the World he was partaker of the Divine Glory and Happiness: And this I have shew'd to be the meaning of that expression, *and the Word was with God:* For thus our *B. Saviour* does explain his being with God before the World was, *And now, O Father, glorifie me with thy own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the World was.*

*Thirdly*, That *he was God*; *And the Word was God.* Not *God the Father*, who is the Principle and fountain of the Deity: To prevent that mistake, after he had said that *the Word was God*, he immediately adds in the next *verse*, *the same was in the beginning with God:* He was God by participation of the Divine Nature and Happiness together with the *Father*, and by way of derivation from him as the Light is from the Sun: Which is the common illustration which the ancient *Fathers* of the *Christian* Church give us of this Mystery, and is perhaps the best and fittest that can be given of it. For among finite Beings it is not to be expected, because not possible, to find any exact resemblance of that which is infinite, and consequently is incomprehensible, because whatever is infinite is for that reason incomprehensible by a finite understanding, which is too short and shallow to measure that which is infinite; and whoever attempts it will soon find himself out of his depth.

*Fourthly*, That *all things were made by him:* Which could not have been more emphatically express'd than it is here by the *Evangelist*, after the manner of the *Hebrews*, who when they would say a thing with the greatest force and certainty, are wont to express it both affirmatively and negatively; as, *He shall live and not die*, that is, he shall most assuredly live; so here, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*; that is, he made all Creatures without exception, and consequently he himself is not a Creature, because it is evidently impossible that any thing should ever make it self: But then if it be, and yet was never made, it is certainly true, that he always was, even from all Eternity.

All these Assertions are plainly and expresly contain'd in this Description which the *Evangelist* St. *John* here makes of the Word; and this according to the Interpretation of these Expressions by the unanimous consent of the most ancient *Writers* of the Christian Church: who, some of them, had the advantage of receiving it from the immediate Disciples of St. *John:*

Which

Which surely is no small prejudice against any newly invented and contrary Interpretation; as I shall hereafter more fully shew, when I come to consider the strange and extravagant Interpretation which the *Socinians* make of this Passage of St. *John*; which is plain enough of it self, if they under a pretence of explaining and making it more clear had not disturb'd and darkened it.

Now from this description which the Evangelist here gives of the *Word*, and which I have so largely explain'd in the foregoing Discourse, these *three Corollaries* or Conclusions do necessarily follow.

*First*, That the *Word* here described by St. *John* is not a Creature. This Conclusion is directly against the *Arians*, who affirm'd, that the Son of God was a Creature. They grant indeed that he is the first of all the Creatures both in *Dignity* and *Duration*; for so they understand that expression of the *Apostle* wherein he is called *the first born of every Creature:* But this I have endeavoured already to shew not to be the meaning of that expression.

They grant him indeed to have been God's *Agent* or *Instrument* in the Creation of the World, and that all other Creatures besides himself were made by him: But still they contend that he is a Creature and was made: Now this cannot possibly consist with what St. *John* says of him, that *he was in the beginning*, that is, as hath been already shewn, before any thing was made: And likewise, because he is said to have *made all things*, *and that without him was not any thing made that was made*; and therefore he himself who made all things is necessarily excepted out of the condition or rank of a Creature; as the *Apostle* reasons in another Case, *He hath put all things under his feet: But when he saith all things are put under him*, *it is manifest*, *that he is excepted who did put all things under him:* In like manner, *if by him all things were made*, *and without him was not any thing made that was made*, then either he was not made, or he must make himself; which involves in it a plain Contradiction.

*Secondly*, That this *Word* was from all Eternity: For if *he was in the beginning*, that is, before any thing was made, he must of necessity always have been; because whatever is, must either have been sometime made, or must always have been; for that which was not, and afterwards is, must be made. And this will likewise follow from his being said to *be God*, and that in the most strict and proper sense, which doth necessarily imply his Eternity, because God cannot begin to be, but must of necessity always have been.

*Thirdly*, From both these it will undeniably follow, that he had an existence before his Incarnation and his being born of the *B. Virgin*. For *if he was in the beginning*, that is, from all Eternity, which I have shewn to be the meaning of that expression, then certainly he was before his being born of the *B. Virgin*. And this likewise is implied in the Proposition in the Text, *And the Word was made flesh*, *viz.* that *Word* which the *Evangelist* had before so gloriously described, that *Word* which *was in the beginning*, *and was with God*, *and was God*, and *by whom all things were made*; I say, *that Word* was incarnate and assumed a humane Nature, and therefore must necessarily exist and have a Being before he could assume humanity into an union with his Divinity.

And this Proposition is directly levelled against the *Socinians*, who affirm our *B. Saviour* to be a mere Man, and that he had no existence before he was born of the Virgin *Mary* his Mother: Which Assertion of theirs doth

perfectly contradict all the former Conclusions which have been drawn from the Description here given by St. *John* of the *Word*: And their Interpretation of this passage of St. *John* applying it to *the beginning* of the publication of the *Gospel*, and to the new *Creation* or Reformation of the World by *Jesus Christ*, doth likewise contradict the Interpretation of this passage constantly received, not only by the ancient *Fathers*, but even by the general consent of all *Christians* for fifteen hundred years together, as I shall hereafter plainly shew: For to establish this their Opinion, that our B. Saviour was a mere Man, and had no existence before his Birth, they are forc'd to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. *John*'s Gospel quite to another sense, never mention'd, nor, I believe, thought of by any *Christian* Writer whatsoever before *Socinus*: And it is not easie to imagine how any Opinion can be loaded with a greater and heavier prejudice than this is.

And this I should now take into consideration, and shew, besides the novelty of this Interpretation and the great violence and unreasonableness of it, the utter inconsistency of it with other plain Texts of the *New Testament*.

But this is wholly matter of Controversie and will require a large Discourse by it self; I shall therefore wave the further prosecution of it at present, and apply my self to that which is more practical and proper for the Occasion of this *Season*: So that at present I have done with the *first* thing contain'd in the *first* part of the Text, *viz.* The *Person* here spoken of who is said to be Incarnate, namely, the *Word*, it was *He* that *was made flesh*.

I should then have proceeded to the *Second* thing which I proposed to consider, *viz.* The *Mystery* it self, or the nature of this *Incarnation* so far as the Scripture hath revealed and declared it to us, namely, by assuming our Nature in such a manner as that the Divinity became united to a humane Soul and Body. But this I have already endeavoured in some measure to explain, and shall do it more fully in some of the following Discourses upon this Text. I shall now only make a short and useful reflection upon it with relation to the *Solemnity* of this *Time*.

And it shall be to stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great love of God to Mankind in the Mystery of our Redemption by the *Incarnation* of the *Word*, *the only begotten Son* of God: That he should deign to have such a regard to us in our low condition, and to take our Case so much to heart as to think of redeeming and saving Mankind from that depth of misery into which we had plunged our selves; and to do this in so wonderful and astonishing a manner: That God should employ his eternal and only begotten Son, who had been with him from all Eternity, partaker of his Happiness and Glory, and was *God of God*, to save the Sons of Men by so infinite and amazing a condescention: That God should vouchsafe to become Man, to reconcile Man to God: That he should come down from Heaven to Earth, to raise us from Earth to Heaven: That he should assume our vile and frail and mortal nature, that he might cloath us with glory and honour and immortality: That he should suffer Death to save us from Hell, and shed his blood to purchase eternal Redemption for us.

For certainly the greater the Person is that was employed in this merciful Design, so much the greater is the condescention, and the love and goodness expressed in it so much the more admirable: That the Son of God should stoop from the height of Glory and Happiness to the lowest degree of abasement and to the very depth of misery for our sakes, who were so mean and inconsiderable, so guilty and obnoxious to the severity of his Justice, so altogether unworthy of his Grace and Favour, and so very unwilling

willing to receive it when it was so freely offer'd to us; for, as the *Evangelist* here tells us, *He came to his own, and his own received him not:* To his own Creatures, and they did not own and acknowledge their Maker; to his own Nation and Kindred, and they despised him and esteemed him not. Lord! what is Man, that God should be so mindful of him; or the Son of Man, that the Son of God should come down from Heaven to visit him, in so much humility and condescention, and with so much kindness and compassion?

Blessed God and Saviour of Mankind! What shall we render to thee for such mighty Love, for such inestimable Benefits as thou hast purchased for us, and art ready to confer upon us? What shall we say to thee, O thou preserver and lover of Souls, so often as we approach thy *Holy Table*, there to commemorate this mighty Love of thine to us, and to partake of those invaluable Blessings which by thy precious bloodshedding thou hast obtained for us? So often as we there remember, that thou wast pleased to assume our mortal Nature, on purpose to live amongst us for our Instruction, and for our Example, and to lay down thy life for the Redemption of our Souls and for the Expiation of our Sins; and to *take part of flesh and blood* that thou mightest shed it for our sakes: What Affections should these thoughts raise in us? What Vows and Resolutions should they engage us in, of perpetual love and gratitude, and obedience to thee the most gracious and most glorious Redeemer of Mankind?

And with what Religious Solemnity should we, more especially at this Time, celebrate the *Incarnation* and Birth of the Son of God, by giving praise and *glory to God in the highest*, and by all possible demonstration of charity and *good-will to men?* And as he was pleased to assume our Nature, so should we, especially at this Season, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, sincerely embrace and practise his Religion, *making no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof:* And now that the *Sun of Righteousness* is risen upon the World, we should *walk as Children of the light, and demean our selves decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy:* And should be very careful not to abuse our selves by Sin and Sensuality, upon this very consideration that the Son hath put such an honour and dignity upon us: We should reverence that Nature which God did not disdain to assume and to inhabit here on Earth, and in which he now gloriously reigns in Heaven, at the right hand of his *Father; to him be glory for ever and ever.* Amen.

# SERMON XLIV.

## Concerning the Divinity of our B. Saviour.

Preached in the

Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry, January 6.* 1679.

### John I. 14.

*The Word was made flesh.*

I Proceed now to prosecute the *third Corollary* or Conclusion, which does necessarily follow from the Description which St. *John* in the beginning of his *Gospel* gives of the *Word*, and which I have so largely explain'd in the foregoing Discourse: And it was this,

That *the Word*, here described by the *Evangelist*, *had an existence before his Incarnation and his being born of the B. Virgin.*

This *Assertion*, I told you, is levelled directly against the *Socinians*, who affirm our *B. Saviour* to be a mere Man, and deny that he had any existence before he was born of the Virgin *Mary* his Mother: which *Position* of theirs does perfectly contradict all the former *Conclusions* which have been so evidently drawn from the Description here given of the *Word:* And not only so, but hath forced them to interpret this whole passage in the beginning of St. *John*'s *Gospel* in a very different sense from that which was constantly received, not only by the ancient *Fathers*, but by the general consent of all *Christians* for 1500 years together: For to establish this their Opinion of our Saviour's being a mere Man and having no existence before his Birth, they have found it necessary to expound this whole passage quite to another sense, and such as by their own confession was never mentioned, nor, I believe, thought of by any *Christian* Writer whatsoever before *Socinus*.

For this Reason I shall very particularly consider the Interpretation which *Socinus* gives of this Passage of St *John*; and besides the novelty of it, which they themselves acknowledge, I make no doubt very plainly to manifest the great Violence and Unreasonableness, and likewise the Inconsistency of it with other plain *Texts* of the *New Testament.*

It is very evident what it was that forc'd *Socinus* to so strain'd and violent an Interpretation of this Passage of the Evangelist, namely, that he plainly saw how much the obvious, and natural, and generally receiv'd Interpretation of this Passage, in all Ages of the *Christian* Church down to his time, stood in the way of his *Opinion*, of *Christ*'s being a mere Man, which he was so fond of, and must of necessity have quitted, unless he would either have denied the Divine Authority of St. *John*'s *Gospel*, or else could supplant the common Interpretation of this Passage by putting a quite different sense upon it: Which sense he could find no way to support without such pitiful and wretched shifts, such precarious and arbitrary Suppositions, as a Man of so sharp a Reason and Judgment as *Socinus*, could not, I thought, have ever been driven to. But necessity hath no Laws either of Reason or Modesty,

desty, and he who is resolved to maintain an Opinion which he hath once taken up must stick at nothing, but must break through all difficulties that stand in his way: And so the *Socinians* have here done, as will, I hope, manifestly appear in the following Discourse.

They grant, that by the *Word* is here meant *Christ*, by whom God spake and declared his Mind and will to the World; which they make to be the whole Reason of that Name or Title of the *Word* which is here given him, and not because by Him God made the World: For the *Word* by which God made the World, they tell us, was nothing but the powerful Command of God, and not a Person who was design'd to be the *Messias*. And because, as I have shewed before, the ancient *Jews* do make frequent mention of this Title of the *Word of God* by whom they say *God made the World*, and do likewise apply this Title to the *Messias*; therefore to avoid this, *Schlictingius* says, that the *Chaldee Paraphrasts*, *Jonathan* and *Onkelos*, do sometimes put the *Word of God* for *God*, by a *Metonymy* of the Effect for the Cause; but then he confidently denies that they do any where distinguish the *Word* of God from the *Person* of God, as they acknowledge that St. *John* here does; nor do they, says he, understand by the *Word of God* the *Messias*, but on the contrary, do oppose the *Word of God* to the *Messias*: All which is most evidently confuted by that passage which I cited before out of the *Targum* of *Jonathan*, who renders those words concerning the *Messias*, *The Lord said unto my Lord*, &c. thus, *The Lord said unto his* Word, *sit thou on my right hand*, &c. where you see both that the *Word of God* is plainly distinguished from *God*, and that it is the Title given to the *Messias*; which are the two things which *Schlictingius* doth so confidently deny.

This then being agreed on all hands, that by the *Word*, St. *John* means the *Messias*, I shall in the next place, shew by what strained and forced arts of Interpretation the *Socinians* endeavour to avoid the plain and necessary consequence from this Passage of St. *John*, namely, that the *Word* had an Existence before he was *made flesh* and born of the *B. Virgin* his Mother.

This then, in short, is the Interpretation which they give of this Passage, than which I think nothing can be more unnatural and violent.

*In the beginning*; This they will by no means have to refer to the *Creation* of the World, but to the beginning of the *Gospel*; that is, when the *Gospel* first began to be published; then was *Christ*, and not before: *And he was with God*, that is, says *Socinus*, *Christ* as he was the *Word of God*, that is, the *Gospel* of *Christ* which was afterwards by him revealed to the World was first only known to God: But all this being somewhat hard, first to understand by *the beginning* not the *beginning* of the *World* but of the *Gospel*; and then by the *Word* which *was with God* to understand the *Gospel* which before it was revealed was only known to God; they have upon second thoughts found out another meaning of those words; *And the Word was with God*, that is, saith *Schlictingius*, *Christ* was taken up by God into Heaven, and there instructed in the Mind and Will of God, and from thence sent down into the World again to declare it to Mankind.

*And the Word was God*; that is, say they, *Christ* had the Honour and Title of God conferr'd upon him, as *Magistrates* also have, who in the *Scripture* are called Gods: *He was God*, not by *Nature* but by *Office* and by Divine constitution and appointment.

*All things were made by him:* This they will needs have to be meant of the *Renovation* and *Reformation* of the World by *Jesus Christ*, which is several times in *Scripture* call'd a *new Creation*.

This, in short, is the Sum of their Interpretation of this Passage, which I shall now examine, and to which I shall oppose *three* things as so many invincible prejudices against it.

*First*, That not only all the ancient *Fathers* of the *Christian* Church, but so far as I can find, all *Interpreters* whatsoever for *fifteen hundred* years together did understand this Passage of St. *John* in a quite different sense, namely, of the *Creation* of the *material*, and not of the *Renovation* of the *moral* World: And I add further, that the generality of *Christians* did so understand this Passage, as to collect from it as an undoubted *Point* of *Christianity*, that the *Word* had a real existence before he was born of the *B. Virgin*.

And thus not only the Orthodox *Christians*, but even the *Arians*, and *Amelius* the *Platonist*, who was a more indifferent judge than either of them, did understand this Passage of St. *John*, without any thought of this Invention that he spake not of the *old*, but of the *new Creation* of the World by *Jesus Christ*, and the Reformation of Mankind by the preaching of the *Gospel*: Which I dare say no indifferent Reader of St. *John*, that had not been prepossess'd and byass'd by some violent prejudice, would ever have thought of.

And surely it ought to be very considerable in this Case, that the most ancient *Christian* Writers, *Ignatius*, *Justin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, and even *Origen* himself who is called *the Father of Interpreters*, are most express and positive in this matter. For *Ignatius* was the Scholar of *Polycarp*, who was a Disciple of St. *John*; and *Justin Martyr* lived in the next Age to that of the *Apostles*; and *Origen* was a Man of infinite Learning and Reading, and in his *Comments* upon *Scripture* seems to have considered all the *Interpretations* of those that were before him: So that if this, which *Socinus* is so confident is the true sense of St. *John*, had been any where extant, he would not probably have omitted it; nay rather would certainly have mentioned it, if for no other reason, yet for the surprising novelty and strangeness of it, with which he was apt to be over-much delighted.

So that if this Interpretation of *Socinus* be true, here are two things very wonderful, and almost incredible, *First*, that those who lived so very near St. *John*'s Time, and were most likely to know his meaning, as *Ignatius*, *Justin Martyr*, *&c.* should so widely mistake it: And then, that the whole *Christian* World should for so many Ages together be deceived in the ground and foundation of so important an *Article* of Faith, if it were true; or if it were not, should be led into so gross and dangerous an Error as this must needs be, if *Christ* had no real existence before he was born into the World: And which would be necessarily consequent upon this, that no Man did understand this *Passage* of St. *John* aright before *Socinus*. This very consideration alone, if there were no other, were sufficient to stagger any prudent Man's belief of this Interpretation.

And as to the *Novelty* of it, *Socinus* himself makes no difficulty to own it; nay he seems rather to rejoice and to applaud himself in it. Unhappy Man! that was so wedded to his own Opinion that no Objection, no Difficulty could divorce him from it.

And for this I refer my self to his *Preface* to his Explication of this first *Chapter* of St. *John*'s *Gospel*; where you shall find these words concerning the Passage now in Controversie, *Quorum verus sensus omnium prorsus, qui quidem extarent, explanatores latuisse videtur*; *The true sense of which words*, says he, *seems to have been hid from all the Expositors that ever were extant*: And upon these words, *v.* 10. *He was in the World, and the World was made*

by

*by him*, he hath this expression, *quid autem hoc loco sibi velit* Johannes, *à nemine quod sciam adhuc rectè expositum fuit, but what St.* John *means in this place was never yet, that I know of, by any Man rightly explain'd:* And *Schlictingius* after him, with more confidence but much less decency, tells us, that concerning the meaning of those expressions, *in the beginning*, and of those which follow concerning the *Word*, the ancient *Interpreters* did *ab Apostoli mente delirare*, went *so far from the Apostle's meaning as if they had rav'd and been out of their wits:* Which is so extravagantly said, and with so much contempt of those great and venerable Names, who were the chief Propagaters of *Christianity* in the World, and to whom all Ages do so justly pay a Reverence, that nothing can be said in excuse of him but only that it is not usual with him to fall into such rash and rude expressions. But the Man was really pinch'd by so plain and pressing a *Text*, and where Reason is weak and blunt, Passion must be whetted, the only weapon that is left when Reason fails: And I always take it for granted, that no Man is ever Angry with his Adversary but for want of a better Argument to support his Cause.

And yet to do right to the Writers on that side, I must own, that generally they are a Pattern of the fair way of disputing, and of debating matters of Religion without heat and unseemly reflections upon their Adversaries, in the number of whom I did not expect that the Primitive *Fathers* of the *Christian* Church would have been reckoned by them. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from passion and transport which becomes a serious and weighty Argument: And for the most part they reason closely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution, with great dexterity and decency, and yet with smartness and subtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words: Virtues to be praised where-ever they are found, yea even in an Enemy, and very worthy our imitation: In a word, they are the strongest managers of a weak Cause and which is ill-founded at the bottom, that perhaps ever yet medled with Controversie: Insomuch that some of the *Protestants* and the generality of the *Popish* Writers, and even of the *Jesuits* themselves, who pretend to all the Reason and Subtilty in the World, are in comparison of *them* but mere *Scolds* and *Bunglers:* Upon the whole matter, they have but this one great defect, that they want a good Cause and Truth on their Side; which if they had, they have Reason, and Wit, and Temper enough to defend it.

But to return to the business. That which I urge them withal, and that from their own Confession, is this, that this Interpretation of theirs is perfectly new, and unknown to the whole *Christian* World before *Socinus*; and for that Reason, in my Opinion, not to be bragg'd of: Because it is in effect to say that the *Christian* Religion, in a point pretended on both Sides to be of the greatest moment, was never rightly understood by any since the *Apostles* days, for *fifteen hundred* years together: And which makes the matter yet worse, that the *Religion* which was particularly design'd to overthrow *Polytheism* and the belief of more Gods, hath, according to *them*, been so ill taught and understood by *Christians* for so many Ages together, and almost from the very beginning of *Christianity*, as does necessarily infer a Plurality of Gods: An inconvenience so great, as no Cause, how plausible soever it may otherwise appear, is able to stand under and to sustain the weight of it.

For this the *Socinians* object to us at every turn, as the unavoidable consequence of our Interpretation of this Passage of St. *John*, and of all other

*Texts* of *Scripture* produced by us to the same purpose, notwithstanding that this Interpretation hath obtain'd in the *Christian* Church for so many Ages: Now whosoever can believe that the *Christian* Religion hath done the Work for which it was principally design'd so ineffectually, must have very little reverence for it, nay, it must be a marvellous civility in him if he believe it at all. All that can be said in this Case is, that it pleases God many times to permit Men to hold very inconsistent things, and which do in truth, tho' they themselves discern it not, most effectually overthrow one another.

*Secondly*, Another mighty prejudice against this Interpretation is this, that according to this rate of liberty in interpreting *Scripture*, it will signifie very little or nothing, when any Person or Party is concern'd to oppose any Doctrine contained in it; and the plainest *Texts* for any *Article* of Faith, how fundamental and necessary soever, may by the same arts and ways of Interpretation be eluded and render'd utterly ineffectual for the establishing of it: For example. If any Man had a mind to call in question that *Article* of the *Creed* concerning the *Creation of the World*, why might he not, according to *Socinus* his way of Interpreting St. *John*, understand the *first* Chapter of *Genesis* concerning the *beginning* of the *Mosaical* Dispensation, and Interpret the *Creation of the Heaven and the Earth* to be the Institution of the *Jewish* Polity and Religion, as by the *new Heavens* and the *new Earth* they pretend is to be understood the new State of things under the *Gospel*? And why may not the *Chaos* signifie that state of Darkness and Ignorance in which the World was before the giving of the Law by *Moses*? And so on; as a very learned *Divine* of our own hath ingeniously shewn more at large.

Dr. *Stilling-fleet*, now Bishop of *Worcester*.

There is no end of Wit and Fancy, which can turn any thing any way, and can make whatever they please to be the meaning of any *Book*, though never so contrary to the plain design of it, and to that sense which at the first hearing and reading of it is obvious to every Man of common sense.

And this, in my Opinion, *Socinus* hath done in the Case now before us, by imposing a new and odd and violent sense upon this Passage of St. *John*, directly contrary to what any Man would imagine to be the plain and obvious meaning of it, and contrary likewise to the sense of the *Christian* Church in all Ages down to his Time; who yet had as great or greater advantages of understanding St. *John* aright, and as much Integrity as any Man can now modestly pretend to: And all this only to serve and support an *Opinion* which he had entertain'd before, and therefore was resolv'd one way or other to bring the *Scripture* to comply with it: And if he could not have done it, it is greatly to be feared that he would at last have called in question the Divine Authority of St. *John*'s Gospel rather than have quitted his *Opinion*.

And to speak freely, I must needs say that it seems to me a much fairer way to reject the Divine Authority of a *Book*, than to use it so disingenuously, and to wrest the plain expressions of it with so much straining and violence from their most natural and obvious sense: For no Doctrine whatsoever can have any certain foundation in any *Book*, if this liberty be once admitted, without regard to the plain Scope and Occasion of it to play upon the words and phrases with all the arts of *Criticism* and with all the variety of *Allegory* which a brisk and lively Imagination can devise: which I am so far from admiring in the expounding of the Holy *Scriptures*, that I am always jealous of an over-labour'd and far-fetch'd Interpretation of any *Author* whatsoever.

I do readily grant, that the *Socinian* Writers have managed the Cause of the *Reformation* against the Innovations and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome* both in Doctrine and Practice, with great accuteness and advantage

in many respects: But I am sorry to have cause to say, that they have likewise put into *their* hands better and sharper weapons than ever they had before for the weakning and undermining of the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, which *Socinus* indeed hath in the general strongly asserted, had he not by a dangerous liberty of imposing a foreign and forc'd sense upon *particular* Texts brought the *whole* into uncertainty.

*Thirdly*, Which is as considerable a prejudice against this new Interpretation of this Passage of St. *John* as either of the former, I shall endeavour to shew, that this *Point*, of the existence of the *Word* before his *Incarnation*, does not rely only upon this single *Passage* of St. *John*, but is likewise confirmed by many other *Texts* of the *New Testament* conspiring in the same sense and utterly incapable of the Interpretation which *Socinus* gives of it.

I find he would be glad to have it taken for granted that this is the only *Text* in the *New Testament* to this purpose: And therefore he says very cunningly, that this Doctrine of the existence of the Son of God before his Incarnation is too great a Doctrine to be establish'd upon one single *Text*: And this is something, if it were true, that there is no other *Text* in the *New Testament* that does plainly deliver the same sense: And yet this were not sufficient to bring in question the Doctrine deliver'd in this *Passage* of St. *John*.

That *God is a Spirit* will I hope be acknowledged to be a very weighty and fundamental Point of Religion, and yet I am very much mistaken if there be any more than one *Text* in the whole *Bible* that says so, and that *Text* is only in St. *John*'s Gospel. I know it may be said, that from the light of natural Reason it may be sufficiently prov'd that God is a Spirit: But surely *Socinus* of all Men, cannot say this with a good grace; because he denies that the existence of a God can be known by natural light without Divine Revelation: And if it cannot be known by natural light that there is a God, much less can it be known by natural light what God is, whether a Spirit or a Body.

And yet after all it is very far from being true that there is but one *Text* to this purpose; which yet he thought fit to insinuate by way of excuse for the novelty and boldness of his Interpretation; of which any one that reads him may see that he was sufficiently conscious to himself, and therefore was so wise as to endeavour by this sly insinuation to provide and lay in against it. I have likewise another Reason which very much inclines me to believe that *Socinus* was the first Author of this Interpretation, because it seems to me next to impossible, that a Man, of so good an Understanding as he was, could ever have been so fond of so ill-favour'd a Child if it had not been his own. And yet I do not at all wonder that his Followers came in to it so readily, since they had him in so great a veneration, it being natural to all *Sects* to admire their *Master*; besides that I doubt not but they were very glad to have so great an Authority as they thought him to be, to vouch for an Interpretation which was so seasonably devis'd for the relief of their Cause, in so much danger to be overthrown by a *Text* that was so plain and full against them.

And how little ground there is for this Insinuation, that this is the only *Text* in the *New Testament* to this purpose, I shall now shew from a multitude of other *Texts* to the same sense and purpose with this *Passage* of St. *John*. And I shall rank them under *two* Heads.

*First*, Those which expresly assert the Son of God to have been, and to have been in Heaven with God, and partaker with him in his Glory, before his *Incarnation* and appearance in the World.

*Secondly*, Those which affirm that the World and all Creatures whatsoever were made by him.

I. Those *Texts* which expresly assert *the Son of God to have been, and to have been in Heaven with God, and partaker with him in his Glory, before his Incarnation and appearance in the World.*

John 3. 13. *No Man hath ascended into Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven:* Where the *Son* is said to have *come down from Heaven*, in respect of the Union of his Divinity with human Nature and his special residence in it here below: And yet he is said to have *come down from Heaven* as still *to be in Heaven: He that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven*, that is, in respect of his Divinity by which he is every-where present: *And he that came down from Heaven* is here called *the Son of Man*, by the same Figure that his *Blood* is elsewhere called *the* Acts 20. 28. *Blood of God*, the *Apostle* ascribing that to one Nature which is proper to the other: this we take to be the most natural and easie sense of this *Text*, and most agreeable to the tenour of the *New Testament*.

John 6. 62. Again, *What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?* So that if he really *ascended up into Heaven* after his Resurrection, he *was* really *there* before his Incarnation.

John 8. 58. *Before Abraham was*, says our *B. Saviour*, *I am*; the obvious sense of which words is, that *he* had a real existence before *Abraham* was actually in Being.

John 13. 3. Again it is said, that *Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God*, &c.

John 16. 27, v. 28. And again; *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World; again, I leave the World, and go to the Father:* This was so very plain, that his *Disciples* who were slow enough of apprehension in other things, did understand this so well that upon this declaration of his they were convinc'd of his *Omniscience*, which is an *incommunicable Property* of the *Divinity:* For so it immediately follows, *His Disciples said unto him* v. 29, 30. *Lord, now speakest thou plainly and speakest no Parable: Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* So that either this which I have all along declar'd must be the meaning of our *Saviour*'s words, or else his *Disciples* were grosly mistaken and did not understand him at all: And if so, then surely our *Saviour* before he had proceeded any further would have corrected their mistake and have set them right in this matter: But so far is he from doing that, that he allows them to have understood him aright: For thus it follows, *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?* as if he had said, I v. 31. am glad that you are at last convinc'd and do believe that *I came from God*, and must *return to him*; and that *I know all things*, which none but God can do. Is it now possible for any Man to read this *Passage* and yet not to be convinced that the *Disciples* understood our *Saviour* to speak literally? But if his meaning was as the *Socinians* would make us believe, then the *Disciples* did perfectly mistake his words; the contrary whereof is I think very plain and evident beyond all contradiction.

Again,

Again, *And now, O Father, glorifie me with thine own self, with the glory* John 17. 5.
*which I had with thee, before the World was:* This surely is not spoken of his *being with God* after his Incarnation, and before his entrance upon his publick Ministry: They have not, I think, the face to understand this expression, *before the World was*, of the new Creation, but do endeavour to avoid it another way, which I shall consider by and by.

And a little after, *I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and* v. 8
*they have received them, and known assuredly that I came from thee, and that thou didst send me.*

Again, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we* 1 John 1. 1,
*have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled* 2.
*of the Word of life: for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life*, for so he calls *the Son of God*, *which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.*

And that he was not only *with God* before he assumed humane Nature, but also was really God, St. *Paul* tells us: *Let this mind be in you, which was* Phil. 2. 5, 6,
*also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God* οὐχ' ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, *did* 7, 8.
*not arrogate to himself to be equal with God*, that is, he made no ostentation of his Divinity: For this I take to be the true meaning of that *Phrase*, both because it is so used by *Plutarch*, and because it makes the sense much more easie and current, thus, *who being in the form of God, did not assume an equality with God*, that is, he did not appear in the Glory of his Divinity, which was hid under a Veil of human flesh and infirmity; *But he emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man*, or in the habit of a Man, *he became obedient to the death*, &c. So that if *his being made in the likeness and fashion of a man* does signifie that he was really Man by his Incarnation, then surely his *being in the form of God* when he took upon him *the fashion and likeness of Man* and *the form of a Servant* or Slave, must in all reason signifie that he was really *God* before he became *Man:* For which reason the same *Apostle* 1 Tim. 3. 16.
did not doubt to say, that *God was manifested in the flesh.*

And now I hope that I have made it fully appear, that the beginning of St. *John*'s Gospel is not the single and only *Text* upon which we ground this *great Doctrine* as *Socinus* calls it, and as we really esteem it to be: For you see that I have produced a great many more; to avoid the dint and force whereof the *Socinians* do chiefly make use of these *two* Answers.

*First*, To those *Texts* which say that *he was in Heaven* and *came down from Heaven*, they give this answer; That our *Saviour* some time before his entrance upon his publick Ministry, they cannot agree precisely *when*, was taken up into Heaven, and then and there had the Will of God reveal'd to him, and was sent down from Heaven again to make it known to the World.

This is so very arbitrary and precarious a Supposition that I must confess my self not a little out of countenance for them, that Men of so much Wit and Reason should ever be put to so sorry and pitiful a shift. For can any Man imagine, that in so exact a History of our *Saviour*'s Life, written by several Persons, the Relation of so important a matter as this, and of the circumstances of it, should be wholly omitted? That we should have a particular account of his being carried into *Egypt* in his infancy, and of the time when he was brought back from thence: Of his disputing in the Temple with the *Jewish* Doctors, and putting them to silence, when he was but twelve years of Age: A punctual Relation of his being baptized by *John*; and how after that *he was led by the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of*

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*the Devil*, and was carried by that *evil Spirit* from one place to another: But not one word of his being taken up by God into Heaven, and of his coming down again from thence; not the least intimation given either of the time or any other circumstance of so memorable a thing, upon which, according to the *Socinians*, the Authority of his Mission and the Divinity of his Doctrine did so much depend: When so many things of so much less moment, are so minutely and exactly reported, what can be the reason of this deep silence in all the *Evangelists* concerning this matter? But above all, it is to be wondred that St. *John*, who wrote his *Gospel* last, and as *Eusebius* tells us on purpose to supply the omissions of the other *Evangelists*, should give no account of this thing, and yet, as the *Socinians* suppose, should so often take it for granted and refer to it; as when it is said that *he came forth from God*, and was *sent from God*, and *came down* from Heaven, besides several other Expressions to this purpose.

Who can believe this? And can it then be reasonable to suppose such a thing? And this without any ground from the History of the *Gospel*, only to serve an *Hypothesis* which they had taken up, and which they cannot maintain, unless they may have leave to make a Supposition for which they have nothing in truth to say, but only that it is necessary to defend an Opinion which they are resolv'd not to part with upon any terms.

This is so inartificial, not to say absurd a way of avoiding a difficulty, to take for granted whatever is necessary to that purpose, that no man of common ingenuity would make use of it: And there is no surer sign that a Cause is greatly distress'd than to be driven to such a shift. For do but give a Man leave to suppose what he pleases and he may prove what he will, and avoid any difficulty whatever that can be objected to him.

Besides, that according to this device the Son of God did not first come from Heaven into the World, as the *Scripture* seems every where to say, but first was in the World, and then went to Heaven, and from thence came back into the World again: And he was not *in the beginning with God*, but was first in the World and afterwards with God; whereas St. *John* says, that the *Word was in the beginning*, and then *was made flesh and dwelt among us*: But they say, that he first *was made flesh*, and then a great while after was *in the beginning with God*: A supposition which is quite contrary to all the *Texts* which I have mentioned.

Nor do the several parts of this Interpretation of theirs agree very well together. *In the beginning*, that is, say they, when the *Gospel* first began to be publish'd, *was the Word*; and then, that is, *in the beginning*, *he was with God*, that is, in Heaven to receive from God that Doctrine which he was to deliver to the World: But if by *the beginning* be meant the first publication of the *Gospel*, he was not *then* with God, but had been with him and was come back from him before he entred upon his publick Ministry, which they make to be the meaning of *the beginning*: And *in the beginning he was God*, that is, say they, not God by Nature but by Office and Divine Constitution: And yet in this again they fall foul upon themselves, for they say he was not declared to be God till after his Resurrection and his being advanced to the right hand of God: So that he was not God in their sense of *the beginning*, that is, when he entred upon his publick Ministry and began to preach the *Gospel*.

*Secondly*, As to some other *Texts* which speak of his existence before his Incarnation, as that he was *glorified with his Father before the World was*, and *before Abraham was, I am:* These they interpret thus, that *he was glorified with his Father before the World was*, and that he was before *Abraham*

was

*was*, *viz.* in the Divine foreknowledge and Decree: But then surely they do not consider that this is nothing but what might have been said of any other Man and even of *Abraham* himself, that *before he was*, that is, before he had a real and actual existence, he was in the Purpose and Decree of God, that is, before he was, God did intend he should be: Which is a sense so very flat, that I can hardly abstain from saying it is ridiculous. For certainly our *Saviour* did intend by saying this of himself to give himself some preference and advantage above *Abraham*, which this Sense and Interpretation does not in the least do: Because of any other Man, as well as of our *B. Saviour*, it may as truly be said, that he was in the Foreknowledge and Decree of God before *Abraham* was born.

And I cannot but observe further, that our *Saviour* does not say, before *Abraham* was, I was; but *before Abraham was*, I AM: Which is the proper *Name* of God, whereby is signified the eternal duration and permanency of his Being: In which sense he is said by the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* to be *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*; And so likewise he describes himself in St. *John*'s Vision, *I am α and ω, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty:* And that this is spoken of the *Son* you may see in the same *Chapter*, where he says of himself, *I am the first and the last:* And so likewise he describes himself again, *I am α and ω, the beginning and the end, the first and the last:* And that we may not doubt who it is that thus describes his own *Eternity*, he continuing still to speak in the same Person says, *I Jesus have sent mine Angel*, &c. After this I shall only observe, that all these Expressions are the common Description which the Scripture gives of the Eternity of God, whose Being is commensurate to all the several respects of *Duration*, *past*, *present*, and *to come:* Besides that the Attribute of *Almighty* is also a part of this Description, which is so peculiar a Property of God, I mean of *Him* who is *God by Nature*, that the *Scripture* never gives it to any other.

Heb. 13. 8. Rev. 1. 8. v. 17. Rev. 22. 13. v. 16.

II. I shall in the next place produce those *Texts* which do expresly affirm *that the World and all Creatures whatsoever were made by him:* And this will not only infer his Existence before his Incarnation, but from all Eternity.

And for this, besides this *Passage* of St. *John*, we have the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* most express, who says, that *by him God made the Worlds:* And St. *Paul* likewise says the same more fully and particularly, calling *Jesus Christ*, who was the *Son of God*, *the first-born of every Creature*, that is, as I have shewn in my former Discourse, the *Heir* and *Lord of the whole Creation: For by him*, says he, *were all things Created, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, visible and invisible; Whether they be Thrones or Dominions, Principalities or Powers*, for so he calls the several *Orders* of *Angels: all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things:* Or, as he is described in St. *John*'s Vision, he *is the beginning of the Creation of God*, that is, the *Principle* and *Efficient Cause of the Creation*; or else, he was when all things began to be made, and therefore must be before any thing was created, and for that reason could not be a Creature himself; and consequently, must of necessity have been from all Eternity.

Heb. 1. 2. Coloss. 1. 15, 16.

Now these *Texts* must necessarily be understood of the *old Creation* and of the *natural* World, and not of the *moral* World, and the *Renovation* and Reformation of the Minds and Manners of Men by the *Gospel:* For *that* was only the World here below which was reform'd by him, and not *things in*

*Heaven*;

*Heaven*; not the *invisible* World, not the several Orders of *good Angels, which kept their first station*, and have no need to be reform'd and made anew: Nor the *Devil* and his *evil Angels*; for though since the preaching of the *Gospel* they have been under greater restraint and kept more within bounds, yet we have no reason to think that they are at all reform'd, but are *Devils* still, and have the same malice and mind to do all the mischief to Mankind that God will suffer them to do.

So that these *Texts* seem, at first view, to be very plain and pressing of themselves, but they appear to be much more convincing when we consider the groundless Interpretations whereby they endeavour to evade the dint and force of them. For can any Man that seriously attends to the perpetual Style and Phrase of the *New Testament*, and to the plain scope and drift of the *Apostle*'s reasoning in these *Texts*, be induc'd to believe that when St. *Paul* tells us, that *all things were created by him, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, visible and invisible; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers:* I say, can any Man of good sense persuade himself that by all this the *Apostle* means no more than the *moral Renovation* of the *World here below*, and the Reformation of Mankind by *Jesus Christ*, and his *Gospel* which was preach'd unto them?

But there is yet one *Text* more to this purpose, which I have reserv'd to the last place; because I find *Schlictingius* and *Crellius*, in their joint *Comment* upon it, to be put to their last shifts to avoid the force of it. It is in the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, at the beginning of it; where the *Apostle* thus de-
Heb. 1. 2. scribes the *Son of God*; *God*, says he, *hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath constituted heir of all things, by whom also he made the Worlds:* From whence he argues the excellency of the *Gospel* above the *Law*: For the *Law* was given by *Angels*, but the *Gospel* by the *Son of God*; whose preheminence above the *Angels* he shews at large in the two *first Chapters* of this *Epistle*.

And to this end he proves the *two* parts of the Discription which had
v. 2. been given of him; namely, that God had *constituted him heir of all things*, and that *by Him he made the Worlds*.

*First*, That God had *constituted him heir of all things*, which is no where said of the *Angels*: But of *him* it is said that was *made so much better than the Angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than*
v. 7. *they*. The *Angels* are only called God's *Ministers*, for which the *Apostle* cites
Psal. 104. 4. the words of the *Psalmist*; but to *Christ* he gives the Title of *his Son*, and
v. 6 *his first-begotten*, by virtue whereof he is *heir of all things: For to which of the Angels said he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* And this I will agree with them to be spoken of *Christ* with respect to his
Rom. 1. 4. Resurrection, by which, as St. *Paul* tells us, he was *powerfully declared to be the Son of God*. This is the *first* Prerogative of *Christ* above the *Angels:* But there is a far greater yet behind; for he proves,

*Secondly*, That he had not only the Title of *God* given him; but that he
v. 8. was *truly and really God*, because *he made the World*. That the Title of
Psal. 45. 6, 7. *God* was given him he proves by a citation out of the *Psalmist*, *But unto the Son he saith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, &c. And that he was *truly and really God* because *he made the World*, he proves by a citation out
v. 10. 11. 12. of another *Psalm*, where it is said of him, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the works of thy hands: They shall perish*, &c.

Let us now see how *Schlictingius* and *Crellius* interpret this *Text* cited out of the *Psalmist* by the *Apostle* as spoken of *Christ*. They say, * that *the Author* of this Epistle *could not have referr'd to Christ the former words*, of this Citation, *which speak of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, unless he had taken it for granted, that Christ is the most high God*; especially *if they be understood, as they must necessarily be* by those who take this for granted, *to be spoken in the first place and directly to*, or concerning, *Christ. For since all the words of the Psalm are manifestly spoken of the most High God, but that Christ is that God is not signified, no not so much as by one word in that Psalm, it is necessary, that if you will have these words to be directed to Christ, you must take it for granted that Christ is that most High God of whom the Psalmist there speaks.*

* Ne referre quidem hæc priora verba, de cœli terræq; creatione loquentia, ad Christum potuisset Autor, nisi pro concesso sumsisset Christum esse summum illum Deum, cœli & terræ Creatorem; præsertim si ea, ut necesse foret, primò & directè ad Christum dicta esse censeas. Nam cum omnia Psalmi verba manifestè de Deo loquuntur, Christum autem Deum illum esse ne unico quidem verbo in toto hoc Psalmo indicetur; necesse est ut si verba illa ad Christum directa esse velis, pro concesso sumas, Christum esse Deum illum summum de quo in Psalmo sermo est.

Now we will join issue with these *Interpreters* upon this *Concession, viz.* that the *Author* of this *Epistle could not have referr'd these words, which speak of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, to Christ, without taking it for granted, that Christ* is truly *that God* who made the World. And if the *Author* of this *Epistle* does affirm these words of the *Psalmist* to be spoken of *Christ*, then they must acknowledge *Christ* to be the *true God who made Heaven and Earth:* But the *Author* of this *Epistle* does as evidently affirm these words to be spoken *to* or *of Christ*, as he does the words of any other *Text* cited in this *Chapter:* And for this I appeal to the common sense of every Man that reads them.

These Interpreters indeed are contented that the *latter* part of this *Citation* should be spoken of *Christ*, but not the *former:* But why not the *former* as well as the latter? when they have so expresly told us, that *all the words of this Psalm are manifestly spoken of God.* What is the Mystery of this? Could they not as easily have interpreted the *former part* which speaks of the *Creation of Heaven and Earth*, concerning the *moral World*, and the *new Creation* or Reformation of Mankind by *Jesus Christ* and his *Gospel*, as well as so many other plain *Texts* to the same purpose? No doubt they could as well have done it, and have set as good a face upon it when they had done it. But why then did they not do it? it was for a Reason which they had no mind to tell, but yet it is not hard to be guessed at; *namely*, that if they had admitted the *former* words to have been spoken of *Christ*, they knew not what to do with the *latter* part of this *Citation*; *They shall perish, but* v. 11, 12
*thou remainest; they shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.* What shall *perish*, and *wax old*, and *be changed?* Why, the *Earth* and the *Heavens* which the *Son* had made; that is, the *moral World*, the Reformation of Mankind, and the *new Creation* of things by the Gospel: All these must have undergone the same fate with the *natural World*, and must not only have been defaced, but utterly destroy'd and brought to nothing. This they would not say, but they did see it, though they would not seem to see it: And we may plainly see by this, that they can interpret a *Text* right when necessity forceth them to it, and they cannot without great inconvenience to their Cause avoid it: But when Men have once resolv'd to hold fast an Opinion they have taken up, it then becomes not only convenient but necessary to understand nothing that makes against it: And this is truly the present case. But in the mean time where is ingenuity and love of Truth?

And thus I have with all the clearness and brevity I could, search'd to the very foundations of this new Interpretation of this *Passage* of the *Evangelist*, upon which the *Divinity* of the *Son of God* is so firmly establish'd; and likewise of the gross Misinterpretations of several other *Texts* to the same purpose in this *Evangelist*, and in other *Books* of the *New Testament*: All which Interpretations I have endeavoured to shew to be not only contrary to the sense of all *Antiquity*, of which, as *Socinus* had but little knowledge, so he seems to have made but little account; but to be also evidently contrary to the perpetual tenour and style of the *H. Scripture*.

Before I go off from this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing wherein our *Adversaries* in this *Cause* do perpetually glory as a mighty advantage which they think they have over us in this *Point* of the *Divinity of the Son of God*, and consequently, that other *Point of the B. Trinity: namely*, that they have Reason clearly on *their* Side in this *Controversie*, and that the Difficulties and Absurdities are much greater and plainer on *our* part than on *theirs*.

Here they are pleas'd to triumph without modesty, and without measure: And yet notwithstanding this, I am not afraid here likewise to join issue with them, and am contented to have this matter brought to a fair Trial at the Bar of *Reason*, as well as of *Scripture*, expounded by the general *Tradition* of the *Christian* Church: I say, by general *Tradition*, which next to *Scripture* is the best and surest confirmation of this great *Point* now in question between us, and that which gives us the greatest and truest light for the right understanding of the true sense and meaning of *Scripture*, not only in *this*, but in most other important *Doctrines* of the *Christian* Religion.

I am not without some *good hopes*, I will not say, *confidence*, for I never thought *that* to be so great an advantage to any Cause as some Men would be glad to make others believe it is; hoping to help and support a weak Argument by a strong and mighty Confidence: But surely Modesty never hurt any *Cause*, and the *Confidence of Man* seems to me to be much like *the Wrath of Man*, which St. *James* tells us, *worketh not the righteousness of God*; that is, it never does any good, it never serves any wise and real purpose of Religion: ch. 1. v. 20.

I say, I am not without some good hopes, that I have in the foregoing *Discourses* clearly shewn, that the tenour of *Scripture* and *general Tradition* are on our Side in this *Argument*, and therefore I shall not need to give my self the trouble to examine this matter over again.

Now as to the Point of *Reason*, the great *Difficulty* and *Absurdity*, which they object to our *Doctrine* concerning this *Mystery*, amounts to thus much, that it is not only above *Reason*, but plainly contrary to it.

As to its being above *Reason*, which they are loth to admit any thing to be; this I think will bear no great Dispute: Because, if they would be pleas'd to speak out, they can mean no more by this, but that our *Reason* is not able fully to comprehend it: But what then? Are there no *Mysteries* in Religion? *That* I am sure they will not say, because God, whose infinite Nature and Perfections are the very Foundation of all Religion, is certainly the greatest *Mystery* of all other, and the most incomprehensible: But *we* must not, nay *they* will not for this reason deny, that there is such a Being as God. And therefore if there be *Mysteries* in Religion, it is no reasonable Objection against them that we cannot fully comprehend them: Because all *Mysteries* in what kind soever, whether in *Religion* or in *Nature*, so long, and so far as they are *Mysteries*, are for that very reason incomprehensible.

But

But they urge the matter much further, that *this* particular *Myſtery* now under debate is plainly contrary to *Reaſon:* And if they can make this good, I will confeſs that they have gained a great point upon us. But then they are to be put in mind, that to make this good againſt us they muſt clearly ſhew ſome plain *Contradiction* in this *Doctrine,* which I could never yet ſee done by any. Great *Difficulty* I acknowledge there is in the Explication of it, in which the further we go, beyond what God hath thought fit to reveal to us in *Scripture* concerning it, the more we are entangled, and that which Men are pleaſed to call an *explaining* of it, does in my apprehenſion often make it more obſcure; that is, leſs plain than it was before; which does not ſo very well agree with a pretence of *Explication.*

Here then I fix my foot: That there are *three* Differences in the *Deity,* which the *Scripture* ſpeaks of by the Names of *Father, Son,* and *H. Ghoſt,* and every where ſpeaks of them as we uſe to do of *three* diſtinct *Perſons:* And therefore I ſee no reaſon why in this Argument we ſhould nicely abſtain from uſing the word *Perſon;* though I remember that St. *Jerome* does ſomewhere deſire to be excuſed from it.

Now concerning theſe *Three* I might in the firſt place urge that plain and expreſs *Text, There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the* 1 Jo
*Word, and the H. Ghoſt; and theſe three are one:* But upon this I will not now inſiſt, becauſe it is pretended, that in ſome *Copies* of greateſt antiquity this *Verſe* is omitted; the contrary whereof is I think capable of being made out very clearly: But this matter would be too long to be debated at preſent.

However that be, thus much is certain and cannot be denied, that our *Saviour* commanded his *Apoſtles* to *baptize all Nations in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt:* And that the *Apoſtles* in their *Epiſtles* do in their moſt uſual form of *Benediction* join theſe Three together: And it is yet further certain, that not only the Name and Title of *God,* but the moſt *incommunicable Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Deity,* are in *Scripture* frequently aſcribed to the *Son* and the *H. Ghoſt;* one *Property* only excepted, which is peculiar to the *Father* as he is the *Principle* and Fountain of the *Deity,* that he is of *himſelf* and of no other; which is not, nor can be ſaid of the *Son* and *H. Ghoſt.*

Now let any Man ſhew any plain and downright *Contradiction* in all this; or any other *Difficulty* beſides this, that the particular manner of the exiſtence of theſe three *Differences* or *Perſons* in the *Divine Nature,* expreſs'd in *Scripture* by the Names of *Father, Son,* and *H. Ghoſt,* is *incomprehenſible* by our *finite* Underſtandings, and *inexplicable* by us: In which I do not ſee what Abſurdity there is, ſince our *Adverſaries* cannot deny that many things certainly are, the particular manner of whoſe exiſtence we can neither comprehend, nor explain.

Let us now ſee, whether the *Opinion* of our *Adverſaries* hath not greater *Difficulties* in it, and more palpable *Abſurdities* following from it. They ſay, that the *Son of God* is *a mere Creature;* not God *by Nature,* and yet truly and really God by *Office* and by Divine appointment and conſtitution; to whom the very ſame Honour and Worſhip is to be given which we give to *Him* who is God by *Nature.*

And can they diſcern no *Difficulty,* no *Abſurdity* in this? What? no *abſurdity* in bringing *Idolatry* by a *back-door* into the *Chriſtian* Religion, one main Deſign whereof was to baniſh Idolatry out of the World? And will they in good earneſt conteſt this matter with us, that the giving *Divine Worſhip* to *a mere Creature* is not *Idolatry?* And can they vindicate themſelves in this

Point any other way, than what will in a great measure acquit both the *Pagans* and the *Papists* from the charge of *Idolatry?*

What? no *Absurdity* in a *God* as it were *but of yesterday?* in a *Creature God*, in a God merely by *positive Institution*; and this in opposition to a plain *moral Precept* of eternal obligation, and to the fix'd and immutable Nature and Reason of things?

So that to avoid the *shadow* and appearance of a *Plurality* of *Deities* they run *really* into it, and for any thing I can see, into downright Idolatry, by

Rom. 1. 25. *worshipping a Creature besides the Creator, who is blessed for ever.*

*They* can by no means allow *two* Gods by *Nature*; no more can *we:* But they can willingly admit of *two* Gods; the *one* by *Nature*, and the *other* by *Office*, to whom they are content to pay the same *Honour* which is due to *Him* who is God by *Nature*. Provided *Christ* will be contented to be but a *Creature*, they will deal more liberally with him in another way than in Reason is fit.

And do they see no Absurdity in all this? nothing that is contrary to *Reason* and *good sense?* nothing that feels like *Inconsistency* and *Contradiction?* Do they consider how often God hath declar'd that *he will not give his glory*

Gal. 4. 8. *to another?* And that the *Apostle* describes *Idolatry* to be, the giving *service*, or worship, to things *which by Nature are no Gods?*

Surely if *Reason* guided by *Divine Revelation* were to chuse a God, it would make choice of one who is declared in *Scripture* to be *the only begotten of the Father, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*: much rather than a *mere Creature*, who did not begin to be till about *seventeen hundred* years ago.

I only propose these things, without any artificial aggravation, to *their* most serious and impartial consideration; after which I cannot think that these great *Masters* of *Reason* can think it so easie a matter to extricate themselves out of these *Difficulties*. The *God of Truth* lead us into all Truth, and enlighten the Minds of those who are in Error, and *give* them *Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth:* For *his* sake who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

And thus much may suffice to have said upon this Argument, which I am sensible is mere Controversie: A thing which I seldom meddle with, and do not delight to dwell upon. But my *Text*, which is so very proper for this *Season* hath almost necessarily engaged me in it: Besides, that I think it a *Point* of that concernment, that all *Christians* ought to be well instructed in it. And I have chosen rather once for all to handle it fully and to go to the bottom of it, than in every *Sermon* to be flurting at it, without saying any thing to the purpose against it: A way which in my Opinion is neither proper to establish Men in the Truth nor to convince them of their Error.

I shall only at present make this short Reflection upon the whole: That we ought to treat the *Holy Scriptures* as the *Oracles of God*, with all reverence and submission of Mind to the Doctrine therein revealed: And to interpret them with that candour and simplicity which is due to the sincere Declarations of God intended for the instruction and not for the deception and delusion of Men: I say, we should treat them as the *Oracles* of God, and not like the *doubtful Oracles* of the *Heathen Deities*, *that is*, in truth of the *Devil*; which were contrived and calculated on purpose to deceive, containing and for the most part intending a sense directly contrary to the appearing and most obvious meaning of the Words: For the *Devil* was the first *Author* of *Equivocation*; though the *Jesuits* have since made it a lawful way

of lying, which *their Father,* of whom they learn'd it, had not credit and authority enough to do.

And it deſerves likewiſe to be very well conſidered by us, that nothing hath given a greater force to the Exceptions of the Church of *Rome* againſt the H. *Scriptures*, being a ſufficient and certain Rule of Faith, than the uncertainty into which they have brought the plaineſt *Text* imaginable for the eſtabliſhing of Doctrines of greateſt moment in the *Chriſtian* Religion, by their remote and wreſted interpretation of them: Which way of dealing with them ſeems to be really more contumelious to thoſe *H. Oracles*, than the downright rejecting of their Authority: Becauſe this is a fair and open way of attacquing them, whereas the other is an inſiduous, and therefore more dangerous way of undermining them.

But as for us who do in good earneſt believe the Divine Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, let us take all our Doctrines and Opinions from thoſe clear Fountains of Truth, not diſturb'd and darkned by ſearching anxiouſly into all the poſſible Senſes that the ſeveral words and expreſſions of *Scripture* can bear, and by forcing that ſenſe upon them which is moſt remote and unnatural, and in the mean time wilfully overlooking and paſſing by that ſenſe which is moſt obvious and eaſie to the common apprehenſion of any unbyaſs'd and impartial Reader. This is to uſe the *H. Scriptures* as the Church of *Rome* have done many Holy and good Men whom they are pleaſed to brand with the odious Name of *Hereticks*, to torture them till they ſpeak the Mind of their Tormentors though never ſo contrary to their own.

I will now conclude this whole Diſcourſe with a *Saying* which I heard from a great and judicious Man, *Non amo nimis argutam Theologiam; I love no Doctrines in Divinity which ſtand ſo very much upon quirk and ſubtilty.* And I cannot upon this occaſion forbear to ſay, that thoſe Doctrines of Religion and thoſe Interpretations of *Scripture* have ever been to me the moſt ſuſpected, which need abundance of Wit and a great many *Criticiſms* to make them out: And conſidering the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Almighty God, I cannot poſſibly believe but that all things neceſſary to be believ'd and practis'd by *Chriſtians* in order to their eternal Salvation are plainly contain'd in the *H. Scriptures:* God ſurely hath not dealt ſo hardly with Mankind as to make any thing neceſſary to be believ'd or practis'd by us which he hath not made ſufficiently plain to the capacity of the unlearned as well as of the learned. God forbid that it ſhould be impoſſible for any Man to be ſaved and to get to Heaven without a great deal of Learning to direct and carry him thither, when the far greateſt part of Mankind have no learning at all. It was well ſaid by *Eraſmus, That it was never well with the Chriſtian World ſince it began to be a matter of ſo much Subtilty and Wit for a Man to be a true Chriſtian.*

# SERMON XLV.

## Concerning the Incarnation of CHRIST.

Preached in the

Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *December* 21. 1680.

### John I. 14.

*The Word was made flesh.*

THE last Year about this time, and upon the same Occasion of the Annual Commemoration of the *Incarnation* and *Nativity* of our B. *Lord and Saviour*, I began to discourse to you upon these Words: In which I told you were contained *three* great Points concerning our *Saviour*, the Author and Founder of our *Religion*.

*First*, His *Incarnation*, *the Word was made*, or became *flesh*.

*Secondly*, His *Life* and Conversation here among us; *and dwelt among us*, ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *he pitched his Tabernacle among us*, he lived here below in this World, and for some time made his residence and abode with us.

*Thirdly*, That in this state of his Humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his Divinity: Whilst he appear d as a Man and lived amongst us, there were great and glorious Testimonies given of Him, that he was the Son of God; and that in so peculiar a manner as no Creature can be said to be: *And we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

I began with the first of these, namely, his, *Incarnation*, *the Word was made flesh:* For the full and clear explication of which words I proposed to consider these *two* things.

I. I. The *Person* here spoken of, and who it is that is here said to be Incarnate, or made *flesh*, namely, *the Word*. And this I have handled at large in my two former *Discourses* upon this *Text*. I shall now proceed in the

II. II. *Second* place to give some account of the nature and manner of this *Incarnation*, so far as the *Scripture* hath thought fit to reveal and declare this Mystery to us. *The Word was made flesh*, that is, He who is personally called the *Word*, and whom the *Evangelist* hath so fully and clearly described in the beginning of his *Gospel*, he *became flesh*; that is, assumed our Nature and became *Man*; for so the word *flesh* is frequently used in *Scripture*, for *Man* or Human Nature.

So that by the *Word's* becoming *flesh*, that is, *Man*, the *Evangelist* did not only intend to express to us that he assumed a human *Body* without a *Soul*, but that he became a *perfect Man*, consisting of *Soul* and Body united. It is very probable indeed that the *Evangelist* did purposely chuse the word *flesh*, which signifies the frail and mortal part of Humanity, to denote to us the great condescension of the *Son of God* in assuming our Nature with all its Infirmities, and becoming subject to frailty and mortality for our sake.

Having thus explained the meaning of this *Proposition*, the *Word was made flesh*,

*flesh*, I shall in a further prosecution of this Argument take into considerati-on these *three* things.

*First*, I shall consider more distinctly what may reasonably be suppos'd to be implied in this expression of the *Word's being made flesh*.

*Secondly*, I shall consider the *Objections* which are commonly brought a-gainst this *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* from the seeming impossibility, or incongruity of the thing.

*Thirdly*, And because, after all that can be said in answer to those *Objecti-ons*, it may still appear to us very strange that God who could without all this circumstance, and condescention even almost beneath the Majesty of the Great God, at least as we are apt to think, have given Laws to Man-kind, and have offer'd forgiveness of Sins and eternal life upon their Repen-tance for sins past, and sincere though imperfect obedience for the future; I say, it may seem strange, that notwithstanding this God should yet make choice of this way and method of our Salvation: I shall therefore in the last place endeavour to give some probable account of this strange and wonderful Dispensation, and shew that it was done in great condescention to the weakness and common prejudices of Mankind; and that when it is throughly consider'd it will appear to be much more for our comfort and ad-vantage than any other way which the wisdom of this World would have been apt to devise and pitch upon. And in all this I shall all along take either the plain declarations of *Scripture*, or the pregnant intimations of it for my ground and guide.

I. I shall consider more distinctly *what may reasonably be supposed to be im-plied in this expression of the Word's being made flesh*; namely, these *five* things.

*First*, The *truth and reality of the thing:* That the Son of God did not on-ly appear in the form of human flesh, but did really assume it: *the Word was made flesh*, as the *Evangelist* expresly declares: For if this had been only a *Phantasm* and *Apparition*, as some *Hereticks* of old did fancy, it would in all probability have been like the appearance of *Angels* mentioned in the *old Testament*, sudden and of short continuance, and would after a little while have vanish'd and disappear'd. But *he dwelt among us*, and convers'd famili-arly with us a long time, and for many years together; and the *Scripture* useth all the expressions which are proper to signify a real Man, and a real *Human Body*, and there were all the signs and evidences of reality that could be: For the *Word* is said to be made *flesh*, and Christ is said to be *of the seed of David according to the flesh*, and to be *made of a Woman*; and all this to shew that he was a real *Man*, and had a real and substantial *Body:* For he was born, and by degrees grew up to be a *Man*, and did perform all such actions as are natural and proper to Men: He continued a great while in the World, and at last suffer'd and dy'd, and was laid in the Grave; He did not vanish and disappear like a Phantasm or Spirit, but he dy'd like other Men: And his Body was raised again out of the Grave; and after he was risen, he conversed forty days upon Earth, and permitted his Body to be handled, and last of all was visibly taken up into Heaven.

So that either we must grant Him to have had a real Body, or we have cause to doubt whether all Mankind be not mere Phantasms and Appariti-ons: For greater evidence no man Man can give that he is really clothed with and carries about him a true and substantial Body, than the *Son of God* did *in the days of his flesh*. It is to me very wonderful upon what ground, or indeed to what end, the *Hereticks* of old, *Marcion* and others, did deny the reality of *Christ's* flesh. Surely they had a great mind to be *Hereticks* who took up so senseless an *Opinion* for no reason, and to no purpose.

*Secondly*,

*Secondly*, Another thing implyed in the *Word's being made flesh*, is, *that this was done peculiarly for the benefit and advantage of Men*: *The Word was made flesh*, that is, became *Man*; for so I have shewn the word *flesh* to be often used in *Scripture*. And this the *Author* of the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* takes very special notice of as a great grace and favour of God to Mankind, that his *Son* appear'd in our Nature, and consequently for our Salvation; as it is said in the *Nicene* Creed, *who for us Men and for our Salvation came down*
Heb. 2. 16. *from Heaven, and was incarnate*, &c. *For verily*, says the *Apostle*, *He took not on him the nature of Angels, but of the seed of Abraham*, οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, *he did not assume the Angelical Nature*, so our *Translators* understood the phrase; but the word also signifies *to take hold* of a thing which is falling, as well as to *assume* or *take on him*: *He did not take hold of the Angels* when they were falling, but suffered them to lapse irrecoverably into misery and ruine: but *he took hold* of Human Nature when it was falling, and particularly *of the Seed of Abraham*, and by *the Seed of Abraham*; that is, by *himself, in whom all the Nations of the Earth were blessed*, he brought Salvation first to the *Jews*, and then to the rest of Mankind. The *Apostle* chuses to derive this *Blessing* from *Abraham*, that so he might bring it nearer to the *Jews* to whom he wrote this *Epistle*, and might thereby more effectually recommend the *Gospel* to them, and the *glad tidings* of that *great Salvation* in which they had so peculiar an interest.

And it is some confirmation of the Interpretation I have given of that expression *he took not on him*, &c. that the *Evangelist* uses the very same word for *taking hold* of one that was ready to sink: For so it is said of St. *Peter*
Matth. 14. 31. when he was *ready to sink*, that *Christ put forth his hand*, καὶ ἐπελάβετο, *and caught hold of him*, and saved him from drowning: And thus the *Son of God caught hold* of Mankind which was ready to sink into eternal perdition: *He laid hold* of our Nature, or as it is exprest'd in the same *Chapter*, *he took part of flesh and blood*, that in our Nature he might be capable of effecting our Redemption and Deliverance.

But it is no where said in *Scripture*, not the least intimation given there, that the *Son of God* ever shew'd such grace and favour to the Angels: But *the Word became flesh*; that is, became *Man*: He did not assume the *Angelical* Nature, but was contented to be cloathed with the *Rags of Humanity* and *to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that is, *of sinful Man*.

*Thirdly*, This expression of the *Word's being made flesh* may further imply his *assuming the infirmities, and submitting to the miseries of Human Nature*. This I collect from the word *flesh*, by which the *Scripture* often useth to express our frail and mortal Nature. The *Son of God* did not only condescend to be *made Man*, but also to become mortal and miserable for our sakes: He submitted to all those things which are accounted most grievous and calamitous to human nature: To hunger and want, to shame and contempt, to bitter pains and agonies, and to a most cruel and disgraceful death: So that in this sense also *he became flesh*, not only by being cloathed with human nature, but by becoming liable to all the frailties and sufferings of it; of which he had a greater share than any of the Sons of Men ever had: for never was sorrow like to his sorrow, nor sufferings like to his sufferings, the weight and bitterness whereof was such as to wring from him, the meekest and most patient endurer of sufferings that ever was, that doleful complaint, *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

*Fourthly*, In this expression, *the Word was made flesh*, is likewise imply'd *the Union of the Divinity with Human Nature in one Person*. And this the *Text* expresseth in such words as seem to signifie a most perfect, and intimate,

and

and vital Union of the *Divine* and *human* Natures of *Christ* in one *Person*: *The Word was made*, or became, *flesh*: Which what else can it signifie but one of these two things? Either that the Eternal *Word* and *only begotten Son* of God was changed into a *Man*, which is not only impossible to be, but impious to imagin: Or else, that the *Son of God* did assume our Nature and became *Man* by his *Divinity*, being united to *human Nature* as the *Soul* is vitally united to the *Body*; without either being changed into it, or confounded with it, or swallowed up by it, as the *Eutychian Hereticks* fancied the *human Nature* of *Christ* to be swalled up of his *Divinity*: Which had it been so, St. *John* had expressed himself very untowardly when he says, *The Word*, *became fllesh*; for it had been quite contrary, and *flesh had become the Word*, being changed into it, and swallowed up by it, and lost in it.

The only thing then that we can reasonably imagine to be the meaning of this expression is this, that the *Son of God* assumed *our Nature*, and united himself with it, as our *Souls* are united with our *Bodies*: And as the *Soul* and *Body* united make one *Person*, and yet retain their distinct *Natures* and Properties; so may we conceive the *Divine* and *human* Natures in *Christ* to be united into one *Person*: And this without any change or confusion of the two *Natures*.

I say, the *Divinity* united it self with *human Nature*: For though *flesh* be only mentioned in the *Text*, yet he did not *only* assume *a human Body*, which was the Heresie of *Apollinaris* and his Followers, upon a mistake of *this* and some other *Texts* of *Scripture*: but he assumed the *whole human Nature*; that is, a human *Soul* united to a real and natural *Body*: for so I have shewn the word *flesh* to be frequently used in *Scripture*, not only for the *Body* but for the *whole Man*, by an usual Figure of speech: As on the other hand, *Soul* is frequently used for the *whole Man* or *Person*: So many *Souls* are said to have gone down with *Jacob* into *Egypt*, that is, so many *Persons*.

But this I need not insist longer upon, our *Saviour* being so frequently in *Scripture*, and so expresly said to be a *Man*; which could with no propriety of speech have been said, had he only assumed a *human Body*: Nor could he have been said to have been *made in all things like unto us*; *sin only excepted*, had he only had a human *Body* but not a *Soul*: For then the meaning must have been, that he had been *made in all things like unto us*; that is, like to a *Man*, that only excepted which chiefly makes the *Man*; that is, the *Soul*: And the addition of those words, *Sin only excepted*, had been no less strange; because a human *Body*, without a *Soul*, is neither capable of being said to have Sin, or to be without it.

And this may suffice to have been spoken in general concerning that great *Mystery* of the *Hypostatical*, as they that love hard words love to call it, or *Personal* Union of the *Divine* and *human Natures* in the *Person* of our *B. Saviour*: In the more particular explication whereof it is not safe for our shallow understandings to wade further than the *Scripture* goes before us, for fear we go out of our depth and lose our selves in the profound inquiry into the deep things of God, which he has not thought fit in this present state of darkness and imperfection to reveal more plainly and fully to us. It ought to be thought sufficient, that the *Scripture* speaking of the same *Person*, *Jesus Christ* our *B. Saviour*, doth frequently and expresly call him both *God* and *Man*: Which how it can be so easily conceived upon any other Supposition than that of the Union of the *Divine* and *human Natures* in one *Person*, I must confess that I am not able to comprehend.

*Fifthly* and lastly, All this which I have shewn to be implyed in this *Proposition*, *the word was made flesh*, does signifie to us the wonderful and

amazing condescension and love of God to Mankind in sending his *Son* into the World, and submitting him to this way and method for our Salvation and recovery. *The Word was made flesh*, What a step is here made in order to the reconciling of Men to God? From *Heaven* to *Earth*; from the top of Glory and Majesty to the lowest gulf of meanness and misery. The *Evangelist* seems here to use the word *flesh*, which signifies the meanest and vilest part of Humanity, to express to us how low the *Son of God* was contented to stoop for the Redemption of *Man*. *The Word was made flesh:* Two *terms*, at the greatest distance from one another, are here brought together: The *Son of God* is here expressed to us by one of his highest and most glorious Titles, the *Word*, which imports both *Power* and *Wisdom*; *Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*, as the *Apostle* calls him: And *human Nature* is here described by its vilest part, *flesh*; which imports frailty and infirmity: *The Word became flesh*, that is, submitted to that from which it was at the greatest distance: *He* who was the *Power of God, and the Wisdom of God*, submitted not only to be called, but really to become a frail and miserable *Man*; not only to assume our Nature, but to put on all the Infirmities, and which is the greatest of all, the *Mortality* of it.

1 Cor. 1. 24.

And this is the *great Mystery of godliness*, that is, of the *Christian Religion*, that *God* should be *manifested in the flesh*, and *become Man*, with a most gracious and merciful design to bring Man back again to God: That he should become a miserable and a *mortal* Man to save us from eternal *death*, and to make us partakers of everlasting *life:* That the *Son of God* should condescend to inhabit our vile Nature, to wear *Rags* and to become a *Beggar* for our sakes; and all this not only to repair those dismal Ruins which Sin had made in it, and to restore us to our former estate; but to better and advance our condition, and by degrees, to bring us to a state of much greater perfection and happiness than that from which we fell.

And that *he* should *become Man* on purpose that he might *dwell among us*, and converse with us, and throughly instruct us in our Duty, and shew us the way to eternal life by his heavenly Doctrine, and as it were take us by the hand and lead us in that way by the perfect and familiar Example of a most blameless and holy life; shewing us how *God himself* thought fit to live in this World, when he was pleased to *become Man*.

That by conversing with us *in the likeness* and nature of *Man*, he might become a *human*, and in some sort an equal and familiar, an imitable and encouraging Example of innocency and goodness, of meekness and humility, of patience and submission to the Will of God under the sorest afflictions and sufferings, and in a word, a most perfect Pattern of a Divine and Heavenly conversation upon Earth.

And that by this means we might for our greater encouragement in holiness and vertue, see all that which the Law of God requires of us exemplified in our Nature, and really performed and practised by a *Man* like our selves.

And that likewise in our nature he might conquer and triumph over the *two* great Enemies of our Salvation, the *World* and the *Devil:* And by first suffering *Death*, and then overcoming it, and by rescuing our nature from the power of it by his Resurrection from the dead, he might *deliver us from the fear of Death*, and give us the glorious hopes of a blessed *Immortality:* For by assuming our frail and mortal Nature he became capable of suffering and of shedding his precious Blood for us, and by that means of purchasing *forgiveness of sins* and *eternal Redemption for us.*

And

And further yet, that by being subject to the Miseries and Infirmities of Humanity, he might from his own Experience, the surest and most sensible sort of knowledge and instruction, learn to have a more compassionate sense of our infirmities, and be more apt to commiserate us in all our sufferings and temptations, and more ready to *succour* us labouring under them.

And finally, that as a Reward of his obedience and sufferings in our Nature, he might in the same Nature be *exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high*, there to continue *for ever to make intercession for us.*

II. I shall in the next place consider the *Objections* against the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God*, from the supposed *impossibility* and incongruity of the thing. I shall mention *three*, and endeavour in as few words as I can to give a clear and satisfactory *Answer* to them.

*First*, It is objected, that the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* as I have explained it, necessarily supposing an Union of the *Divinity* with human *Nature* is, if not altogether *impossible*, yet a very unintelligible thing.

Now that there is no impossibility in the thing seems to be very evident from the Instance whereby I have endeavoured to illustrate it, of the Union between the *Soul* and the *Body* of Man, which we must acknowledge to be a thing possible, because we are sure that it is; and yet no Man can explain, either to himself or to any one else, the manner how it is, or can be conceived to be; but for all that we are certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is so.

And is it not every whit as possible for God, if he so please, to unite *himself* to *human Nature*, as it is for the *Soul* to be united to the *Body*? And that we are not able to conceive the manner how this is or can be done, ought not in reason to be any prejudice against the truth and certainty of the thing: This indeed may make it seem strange to us, but by no means incredible: Because we do most firmly believe a great many things to be, the manner of whose Being we do not at all comprehend. And therefore I take it for an undoubted *Principle* which no Man can gainsay, *That to assure us that a thing really is, it is not necessary for us to know the manner how it is, or can be*: It is sufficient for us to know, that the thing is not impossible; and of *that* we have the very best *Demonstration* that can be, if we be sure that it is.

*Secondly*, Supposing this thing to be possible, and capable in any measure to be understood, which yet I have shewn not to be necessary to our firm belief of it: it is further *objected*, that it seems to be a thing very incongruous, and much beneath the Dignity of the *Son of God*, to be united to *human Nature*, and to submit to so near an Allyance with that which is so very mean and despicable: Yea to be infinitely more below *Him*, than for the greatest *Prince* in this World to match with the poorest and most contemptible Beggar.

But herein surely we measure God too much by our selves, and because we *who are evil* have seldom so much goodness as to stoop beneath our selves for the benefit and good of others, we are apt to think that God hath not so much goodness neither: And because our ill nature, and pride, and folly, as indeed all pride is folly, will not suffer us to do it, we presently conclude, that it does not become God. But what *Pliny* said to the Emperour *Trajan* concerning earthly Kings and Potentates, is much more true of the *Lord of Glory*, the great King of Heaven and Earth; *Cui nihil ad augendum fastigium superest, hoc uno modo crescere potest, si se ipse submittat, securus magnitudinis*

 *suæ*,

*suæ*; *He that is at the top, and can rise no higher, hath yet this one way left to become greater, by stooping beneath himself*; which he may very safely do, *being secure of his own Greatness*. The lower any Being, be he never so high, condescends to do good, the glory of his Goodness shines so much the brighter. Men are many times too proud and stiff to bend, too perverse and ill natur'd to stoop beneath their own little Greatness for the good of others: But God, whose *ways are not as our ways*, and whose *thoughts* are as much above *our* low and narrow *thoughts as the Heavens are high above the Earth*, did not disdain nor think it below him to become *Man* for the good of Mankind; and as much as the *Divinity* is capable of being so, to become miserable to make us happy. We may be afraid, that if we humble our selves we shall be despis'd, that if we stoop others will get above us and trample upon us: But God, though he condescend never so low, is still secure of his own Greatness, and that none can take it from him.

So that in truth, and according to right Reason, it was no real diminution or disparagement to the *Son of God* to become *Man* for the Salvation of Mankind: But on the contrary, it was a most glorious Humility, and the greatest Instance of the truest Goodness that ever was. And there-
Heb. 5. 5. fore the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, when he says, that *Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but* was *appointed of God* to this *Office, as was Aaron*; does hereby seem to intimate, that it was a *glory* to the *Son of God to be made an High Priest* for the Sons of Men: For though it was a strange condescention, yet was it likewise a most wonderful Argument of his Goodness, which is the highest Glory of the Divine Nature.

In short, if God for our sakes did submit himself to a condition which we may think did less become him, here is great cause of thankfulness, but none surely of cavil and exception: We have infinite reason to acknowledge and admire his Goodness, but none at all to upbraid him with his kindness, and to quarrel with him for having descended so much beneath himself to testifie his love to us and his tender concernment for our happiness: Besides, that when we have said all we can about this matter, I hope we will allow God himself to be the best and most competent Judge what is fit for God to do; and that he needs not to take counsel of any of his Creatures, what will
Job 33.12, best become him in this or any other Case: *Behold in this thou art not just*;
13. *I will answer thee, that God is greater than man: Why dost thou dispute against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

*Thirdly*, If our Reason could get over this Difficulty, and admit that God might become *Man*; yet it seems very unsuitable to the *Son of God* and to his great Design of instructing and reforming Mankind, to appear in so low and suffering a condition. This, to the *Heathen Philosophers*, who as the *Apostle* tells us, *by Wisdom knew not God*, did not only seem unreasonable,
1 Cor. 1. but even ridiculous: So St. *Paul* tells us, *We*, says he, *preach Christ crucifi-*
21. *fied, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*: To think that so poor and mean a Man was fit to give Laws to Mankind, and to awe the Minds of Men by the Authority of his Doctrine: That one who was put to Death himself should be believ'd by others when he promised to them Life and Immortality in another World, could not but appear very strange and unreasonable.

For answer to this, besides other excellent Reasons and Ends which the *Scripture* expresly assigns of our *B. Saviour's* Humiliation, in his assuming our Nature with the frailties and miseries of it: As that he might be a *Teacher*, and an *Example* to us: That by his bitter Passion he might make Expiation for Sin, and set us a pattern of the greatest meekness and patience under

the greatest provocations and sufferings: That having suffered so grievously himself, he might know how to commiserate and pity us in all our temptations and sufferings: That *by death he might destroy him that had the power of Death; that is, the Devil; and might deliver those who through fear of Death were all their Life-time subject to bondage:* I say, besides all this, it was of great use that the great *Teacher* and *Reformer* of Mankind should live in so mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride and vanity of the World by this consideration that the Son of God, and the very best Man that ever was, was a *Beggar*, and *had not where to lay his head:* And likewise to convince Men of these *two* great *Truths, That God may grievously afflict those whom he dearly loves;* and *That it is possible for Men to be innocent and contented in the midst of poverty, and reproach, and sufferings.*

Had our *B. Saviour* appeared in the *Person* and *Pomp* of a great *temporal Prince*, the influence of his Authority and Example would probably have made more Hypocrites and servile Converts, but not have persuaded Men one jot more to be inwardly holy and good. The great Arguments that must do that, must not be fetch'd from the Pomp and Prosperity of this World, but from the great and eternal Recompences of the other.

And it is very well worth our observation, that nothing puzzled *Cesar Vaninus*, who was perhaps the first, and the only *Martyr* for *Atheism* that ever was; I say, nothing puzzled him more, than that he could not from the History of our *Saviour*'s Life and Actions, written by the *Evangelists* with so native a simplicity, fasten upon him any probable imputation of a secular interest and design in any thing that he said or did. No doubt but *Vaninus*, before he made this acknowledgment, had searched very narrowly into this matter; and could he have found any colour for such an Imputation, he would have thought it sufficient to have blasted both Him and his Religion.

You may be pleased to consider further, that it was the Opinion of the wisest *Jews*, that the best Men, *the Children of God*, who called God *their Father*, were many times exposed to the greatest sufferings and reproaches for the trial of their faith, and meekness, and patience, as we may see at large in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, where speaking of the malice and enmity of the wicked to one that was eminently righteous, he brings them in saying after this manner; *Let us lie in wait for the righteous, because he is not for our turn; he is clean contrary to our doings: He upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressions of our youth: He professeth to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth himself the Child of the Lord: He is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other mens, his ways are of another fashion: We are esteemed of him as counterfeits, he abstaineth from our ways as from filthiness: He pronounceth the end of the just to be blessed, and maketh his boast that God is his Father: Let us see if his words be true, and what shall happen in the end of him: For if the just man be the Son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hands of his Enemies: Let God examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience: Let us condemn him to a shameful Death,* &c. (Chap. 2. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.)

This is so exact a Character of our *B. Saviour*, both in respect of the holiness and innocency of his Life, and of the reproaches and sufferings which he met with from the wicked and malicious *Jews*, who persecuted him all his life, and at last conspir'd his death, that whoever reads this passage can hardly forbear to think it a Prophetical Descripion of the innocency and sufferings of the *B. Jesus:* For *He* certainly in the most eminent manner was the *Son of God*, being called by the *Evangelist, the only begotten of the Father.*

Or

Or if this was not a *Prediction* concerning our *B. Saviour*, yet thus much at least may be concluded from it, that in the judgment of the *Wisest* among the *Jews*, it was not unworthy of the Goodness and Wisdom of the Divine Providence to permit the best Man to be so ill treated by wicked Men: And further, that in their judgment the innocency and vertues of an eminently righteous Man are then set off to the best advantage, and do shine forth with the greatest lustre, when he is under the hardest circumstances of suffering and persecution from an evil World.

Add to this likewise, that the best and wisest of the *Heathen Philosophers* do frequently inculcate such Doctrines as these: That *Wordly Greatness and Power are not to be admired, but rather to be despis'd by a wise Man.* That *Men may be very good and dear to the Gods, and yet liable to the greatest miseries and sufferings in this World.* That *whoever suffers unjustly, and bears it patiently, gives the greatest testimony to Goodness, and does most effectually recommend Piety and Vertue, as things of greater value than the ease and pleasure of this present Life:* Nay further, that *a good Man* cast into the hardest circumstances of poverty and misery, of reproach and suffering, is the fittest person of all other to be the *Minister*, and *Apostle*, and *Preacher of God* to Mankind; Which are the very words of *Arian* a *Heathen Philosopher*, in his *Discourses of Epictetus.* Now surely they who say such things have no reason to object to our *B. Saviour* his low and suffering condition, as misbecoming one that was to be the great *Teacher* and *Reformer* of the World.

And as to that part of the *Objection*, that he who so freely promised *Immortality* to others could not, or however did not save himself from *Death:* This vanisheth into nothing when we consider that he rescued himself from the power of the Grave: And it is so far from being *ridiculous* to rely upon his Promise of raising us up from the dead, that the Objection it self is really *so.* For can any thing be more reasonable than to rely upon Him for our hopes of Immortality, who by rising from the Grave himself, and by conquering the Powers of Death and Darkness, and *triumphing openly* over them by his visible Ascension into Heaven, hath given so plain and sensible a Demonstration to all Mankind that he is able to make good to the uttermost all the glorious Promises which he hath made to us of a blessed Resurrection to eternal Life and Happiness in another World? *To Him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

# SERMON XLVI.

## Concerning the Incarnation of CHRIST.

Preached in the

Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *December* 28. 1680.

### JOHN I. 14.

*The Word was made flesh*, &c.

THE *third* and last thing which I proposed upon this Argument of the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* was, to give some account of this *Dispensation*, and to shew that the Wisdom of God thought fit thus to order things, in great condescension to the weakness and common prejudices of Mankind: And that when all things are duely weigh'd and consider'd, it will appear much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wisdom of Men would have been most apt to devise and pitch upon. III.

And it is the more necessary to give some account of this matter, because after all that hath hitherto been said in answer to the Objections against it, it may still seem very strange to a considering Man, that God, who could without all this circumstance and condescension have done the business for which his *Son* came into the World and appear'd in our Nature; that is, could have given the same Laws to Mankind, and have offer'd to us the forgiveness of our Sins and eternal Life upon our Repentance for Sins past, and a sincere endeavour of Obedience for the future: I say, that notwithstanding this, he should yet make choice of this way for the Redemption and Recovery of fallen Man, by sending his Son in our Nature to accomplish this Design.

And in the handling of this Argument I shall, as I said before, all along take the express declarations, or at least the pregnant intimations of Scripture for my ground and guide: it being always safest to take the Reasons of the Divine counsels and actions from God himself: And in the

*First* place, I make no manner of doubt to say, that it would be a great presumption and boldness in any Man to affirm, that the infinite Wisdom of God could not have brought about the Salvation of Men by any other way, than by this very way in which he hath done it. For why should we take upon us to set limits to infinite Wisdom, and pretend to know the utmost extent of it? But since God hath been pleased to pitch upon this Way rather than any other, this surely ought to be Reason enough to satisfie us of the peculiar wisdom and fitness of it, whether the particular Reasons of it appear to us or not.

And yet it cannot be denied to be a very noble Argument, and well worthy our consideration, to enquire into the Reasons of this dispensation, and to assign them particularly, if we can. For I look upon *Mysteries* and *Miracles* in Religion to be much of the same nature, and that a great Reverence

rence is due to both where they are certain, and neceſſary in the Nature and Reaſon of the thing: but neither of them are eaſily to be admitted without neceſſity, and very good evidence.

*Secondly*, I conſider in the next place, that in the ſeveral Revelations which God hath made of himſelf to Mankind, he hath with great condeſcenſion accommodated himſelf, both as to manner and degree of them, to the condition and capacity, and other circumſtances of the Perſons and People to whom they were made.

Particularly we find that the Diſpenſation of God towards the *Jewiſh* Nation was full of condeſcenſion to the temper, and prejudices, and other circumſtances of that *People*. For the *Religion* and *Laws* which God gave them were far from being the beſt and moſt perfect in themſelves; in which ſenſe ſome underſtand that *Paſſage* in the Prophet *Ezekiel*, where it is ſaid, that God *gave* them *Statutes which were not good*; that is, very imperfect in compariſon of what he could and would have given them, had they been capable of them; and yet ſuch as were very well ſuited and fitted to their preſent capacity and circumſtances.

*Thirdly*, I obſerve yet further; That though the *Chriſtian* Religion, as to the main and ſubſtance of it, be a moſt perfect Inſtitution, being the *Law of Nature* reviv'd and perfected; yet upon a due conſideration of things it cannot be denied that the manner and circumſtances of this Diſpenſation are full of condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of Mankind and very much accommodated to the moſt common and deeply radicated Prejudices of Men concerning God and Religion; and peculiarly fitted to remove and root them out of the Minds of Men, by ſubſtituting ſomething in the place of them of as near a compliance with them as was conſiſtent with the Honour of Almighty God, and the great Deſign of the *Chriſtian* Religion.

It is not eaſie to give a certain account of the true *Original* of ſome *Notitions* and *Prejudices* concerning *God* and *Religion* which have generally obtained in the World, in that variety of *Religions*, and the different ways of *Worſhip* and *Superſtition* which have been in ſeveral *Nations* of the Earth: But in *Hiſtory* and *Fact* this is certain, that ſome *Notions*, and thoſe very groſs and erroneous, did almoſt univerſally prevail even among thoſe who did extremely differ in the particular *Forms* and *Modes* of their *Superſtition*.

And though ſome of theſe were much more tolerable than others, yet God ſeems to have had great conſideration of ſome very weak and groſs apprehenſions of Mankind concerning *Religion*. And as in ſome of the *Laws* given by *Moſes*, God was pleaſed particularly to conſider the *hardneſs* of *the hearts* of that *People*; ſo he ſeems likewiſe to have very much ſuited the *Diſpenſation* of the *Goſpel* and the *Method* of our *Salvation*, by the *Incarnation* and *Sufferings* of his *Son*, to the common *Prejudices* of Mankind; eſpecially of the *Heathen* World, whoſe Minds were leſs prepared for this *Diſpenſation* than the *Jews*, if we conſider the Light and advantages which the *Jewiſh* Nation had above the *Gentile* World: That ſo by this Means and Method he might wean them by degrees from their groſs conceptions of things, and rectifie more eaſily their wrong apprehenſions by gratifying them in ſome meaſure, and in a gracious compliance with our weakneſs by bending and accommodating the *Way* and *Method* of our *Salvation* to our weak *Capacity* and imperfect *Conceptions* of things.

*Fourthly*, And that God hath done this in the *Diſpenſation* of the *Goſpel* will I think very plainly appear in the following Inſtances; in moſt of which I ſhall be very brief, and only inſiſt ſomewhat more largely upon the laſt of them.

1*ſt*. The

*1st.* The World was much given to admire *Mysteries* in Religion. The *Jews* had *theirs*; several of which by God's own appoinment were reserv'd and kept secret in a great measure from the People; others were added by the Superstition of after-Ages, and held in equal or rather greater Veneration than the former: And the *Heathen* likewise had *theirs*; the *Devil* always affecting to imitate God so far as served his wicked and malicous design of seducing Mankind into *Idolatry* and the *Worship* of *himself:* And therefore the *Scripture* always speaks of the *Heathen Idolatry* as the *Worship* of *Devils*, and not of *God:* So that almost every *Nation* had their peculiar and celebrated Mysteries; most of which were either very odd and phantastical, or very lewd and impure, or very inhuman and cruel, and every way unworthy of the *Deity*,

But the *great Mystery of the Christian Religion*, the *Incarnation of the Son of God*; or, as the *Apostle* calls it, *God manifested in the flesh*; was such a *Mystery*, as for the greatness and wonderfulness, for the infinite mercy and condescension of it, did obscure and swallow up all other *Mysteries.* For which reason the *Apostle*, in allusion to the *Heathen Mysteries* and in contempt of them, speaking of the great *Mystery* of the *Christian* Religion, says, *without controversie great is the Mystery of Godliness, God was manifested in the flesh*, &c. Since the World had such an admiration for Mysteries, he instanceth in that which was a *Mystery indeed*; a *Mystery* beyond all dispute, and beyond all comparison. 1 Tim. 3. 16.

*2dly.* There was likewise a great inclination in Mankind to the Worship of a *visible* and *sensible Deity:* And this was a main Root and Source of the various *Idolatries* in the *Heathen* World. Now to take Men off from *this*, God was pleased to appear in our Nature; that they who were so fond of a *visible Deity* might have one to whom they might pay *Divine Worship* without danger of *Idolatry*, and without injury to the *Divine Nature:* even a true and natural *Image* of God the *Father*, the *Fountain* of the *Deity*; or, as the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* describes the *Son of God*, the resplendency or *brightness of his* Father's *Glory*, *and the express* Character or *Image of his Person.* Heb. 1. 3.

*3dly.* Another *Notion* which had generally obtained among Mankind, was concerning the *Expiation* of the Sins of Men, and appeasing the offended *Deity* by *Sacrifice*, upon which they supposed the *punishment* due to the *Sinner* was transferred, to exempt him from it: Especially by the *Sacrifices* of Men, which had almost universally prevailed in the *Gentile* World.

And this *Notion* of the *Expiation of Sin*, by *Sacrifices* of one kind or other, seems to have obtained very early in the World, and among all other ways of *Divine Worship* to have found the most universal Reception in all Times and Places. And indeed a great part of the *Jewish* Religion and Worship was a plain Condescension to the general apprehensions of Men concerning this way of appeasing the *Deity* by *Sacrifice:* And the greatest part of the *Pagan* Religion and Worship was likewise founded upon the same *Notion*, and Opinion, which because it was so universal, seems to have had its *Original* from the *first Parents* of Mankind; either immediately after the *Creation*, or after the *Flood*; and from thence, I mean as to the substance of this *Notion*, to have been derived and propagated to all their *Posterity*.

And with this general *Notion* of Mankind, whatever the ground and foundation of it might be, God was pleased so far to comply as once for all to have a general *Atonement* made for the *Sins* of all Mankind by the *Sacrifice* of his *only Son*, whom his wise Providence did *permit by wicked hands to be*

*crucified and slain.* But I shall not at present insist any further upon this; which requires a particular Discourse by it self, and may by God's assistance in due time have it.

4*thly*, Another very common *Notion* and very rife in the *Heathen* World, and a great *Source* of their *Idolatry*, was their Apotheoses or *Canonizing* of famous and eminent Persons, who in their Life-time had done great things and some way or other been great *Benefactors* to Mankind, by advancing them after their Death to the Dignity of an *inferiour* kind of *Gods* fit to be worship'd by Men here on *Earth*, and to have their *Prayers* and *Supplications* addres'd to them as proper and powerful *Mediators* and Intercessors for them with the *Superiour Gods:* To these they gave the Titles of *Hero*'s and *Semi dei*, that is, *half Gods*; though the Notion of a *Being* that is just *half infinite* seems to me very hard to be conceiv'd and defin'd.

Now to take Men off from this kind of *Idolatry*, and to put an end to it, behold *One* in our *Nature exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high*, to be worshipped by *Men* and *Angels: One* that was the truly *Great Benefactor* of Mankind: One that *was dead, and is alive again, and lives for evermore*; *to make intercession for us.*

5*thly*, To give but one *Instance* more, which I have already intimated: The World was mightily bent upon adressing their requests and supplications, not to the *Deity* immediately, because their Superstition thought that too great a presumption, but by some *Mediators* between the *Gods* and *them*, who might with advantage in this humble manner present their Requests so as to find acceptance. To this end they made use of the *Dæmons* or *Angels*, and of their *Hero's*, or *Deified Men* whom I mentioned before, by whom they put up their *Prayers* to the *Supreme Gods*, hoping by their *Intercession*, and *Patronage* of their Cause, to obtain a gracious answer of them.

In a gracious compliance with this common apprehension, and thereby more easily and effectually to extirpate this sort of *Idolatry* which had been so long, and so generally practised in the World, God was pleased to constitute and appoint *One* in our *Nature* to be a perpetual *Advocate* and *Intercessor* in *Heaven* for us, to offer up our *Prayers* to *God his Father*, and to obtain *mercy for us, and grace to help in time of need.*

1 Tim. 2. 5. And for ever to take us off from all other *Mediators*, we are expresly told in *Scripture*, that as there is but *one God* to whom we are to pray, so there is but *one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus*, by whom Heb. 7. 25. we are to offer up our *Prayers* to *God:* And that we need not look out for any other, since the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* tells us, that he *is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he lives for ever to make intercession for us.*

And for this reason the Church of *Rome* is altogether inexcusable in this Point, for introducing more *Mediators* and *Intercessors*, more *Patrons* and *Advocates* in Heaven for us: And this not only without any necessity, for who can add any vertue and efficacy to the powerful and prevalent Intercession of the *Son of God?* but likewise in direct contradiction to the express Constitution and appointment of God himself, who says, there is *but one Mediator between God and Men*, and they say there ought to be many more, not only the *B. Virgin*, but all the *Saints* and *Angels* in Heaven. Besides that by this very thing they revive one notorious Piece of the old *Pagan* Idolatry, which God so plainly design'd to extinguish by appointing *One* only *Mediator between God and Men.*

By this *Condescension* likewise God hath given us the comfortable assurance of a most powerful and a perpetual *Intercessor* at *the right hand of God* in our

behalf

behalf. For if we consider *Christ* as *Man* and of the same *Nature* with us, *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh*, so very nearly allied and related to us, we may easily believe, that he hath a most tender care and concernment for us: That he sincerely wisheth our happiness, and will by all means seek to procure it, if we our selves by our own wilful obstinacy do not hinder it, and resist the kindness and *the counsel of God against our selves:* For if we be resolv'd to continue impenitent, there is no help for us; we must *die in our Sins*, and Salvation it self cannot save us.

But to proceed; it cannot surely but be matter of greatest consolation to us, that *the Man Christ Jesus* who is now so *highly exalted at the right hand of God*, and who hath *all power in Heaven and Earth committed to him*, is our *Patron* and *Advocate* in Heaven to plead our Cause with God: Since we cannot but think, that He who was pleased to Become *Brother to us all* does bear a true affection and good will to us: And that he who assumed our *Nature* will heartily espouse our *Cause*, and plead it powerfully for us, and will with all possible advantage recommend our Petitions and Requests to God.

But then, if we consider further, that He did not only take our *Nature*, but likewise took our *infirmities* and bore them many years, in which he had long and continual experience of the saddest sufferings to which human *Nature* is subject in this World, and *was tempted in all things like as we are:* This gives us still greater assurance that he who suffer'd and was tempted himself cannot but be touch'd with a lively sense of our Infirmities, and must have learned by his own Sufferings to compassionate ours, and to be ready to succour us when we are tempted, and to afford us *grace* and *help* suitable to all our wants and Infirmities: For nothing gives us so just a sense of the Sufferings of *others*, as the remembrance of our *own*, and the bitter experience of the like Sufferings and Temptations in our selves.

And this the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* doth very particularly insist upon as matter of greatest comfort and encouragement to us, that the *Son of God* did not only assume our Nature, but *but was made in all things like unto us*, and during his abode here upon Earth did suffer and *was tempted like as we are: For verily*, says the *Apostle*, *he took not on him the nature of Angels, but of* Heb. 2.16, *the seed of Abraham: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like* 17, 18. *unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to* God *:- For in that he himself suffer'd being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

And again, exhorting the *Jews* who were newly converted to *Christianity*, to continue *stedfast in their Profession*, notwithstanding all the sufferings to which upon that account they were exposed; he comforts them with this consideration, that we have *at the right hand of God* so powerful an *Advocate* and *Intercessor* for us as the *Son of God*, who is sensible of our Case, having suffered the same things Himself, and therefore we cannot doubt of his compassion to us, and readiness to support us in the like Sufferings: *Seeing then*, says he, *that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Profession: For we have not an High-Priest, that cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin:* From whence he concludes, that having such an *Intercessor* we may with great confidence and assurance address our Supplications to God for his mercy and help in all our *wants* and *weakness*, to supply the *one*, and to assist the *other: Let us therefore*, says he, *come boldly to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*, χάριν εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν, *grace for seasonable relief.* Heb. 4.14, 15, 16.

So that our *B. Saviour* and *Redeemer*, now that he is advanced to Heaven and exalted to the right hand of God, is not unmindful of us in this height of his Glory and Greatneſs; but with the tendereſt affection and compaſſion to Mankind doth ſtill proſecute the Deſign of our Salvation; and in vertue of his meritorious Obedience and Sufferings, which he preſents to God continually, he offers up our Prayers to Him, and pleads our Cauſe with Him, and repreſents to him all our wants and neceſſities, and procures for us a favourable anſwer of our Prayers, and ſupplies of grace and ſtrength proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And thus, by vertue of this prevalent *Interceſſion* of his with God, for us, our *Sins* are forgiven, and our *Wants* ſupplied, and our *Requeſts* granted, and the gracious *aſſiſtance* and *ſupports* of God's *H. Spirit* are ſeaſonably afforded to us, and we are *kept by the mighty power of God through Faith unto Salvation:* In a word, all thoſe *Bleſſings* and *Benefits* are procured for us by his *Interceſſion* in *Heaven*, which he purchaſed for us by his *Blood* upon *Earth.*

So that in this *Method* of our *Salvation*, beſides many other gracious *Condeſcenſions* which God hath made to the *weakneſs* and *prejudices* of Mankind, our *B. Saviour* hath perfectly ſupplied the *two* great *Wants* concerning which Mankind was at ſo great a loſs before, *namely* the *Want* of an effectual *Expiatory Sacrifice* for *Sin* upon *Earth*, and of a prevalent *Mediator* and *Interceſſor* with God in *Heaven.*

And he hath, in great Goodneſs aud Condeſcenſion to our inveterate Prejudices concerning theſe things, taken effectual care fully to ſupply both theſe *Wants*; having *appeared in the end of the World to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*; and in vertue of that Sacrifice *appearing* now in *Heaven in the preſence of God for us*, he is become our perpetual *Advocate* and a moſt prevalent *Interceſſor* with God in our behalf.

For inſtead of the various and endleſs *Sacrifices* of the *Jews* and *Heathens*, the *Son of God* hath *by one Sacrifice for Sins perfected for ever them that are ſanctified*: And inſtead of the *Mediation* of *Dæmons* and *Heros*, to offer up our *Prayers* to God, which were the *Interceſſors* made uſe of among the *Heathen*, we have *one Mediator between God and Men*, appointed by God himſelf, even the *Son of God*, who *is entred into Heaven it ſelf*, there to *appear in the preſence of God for us:* And to aſſure us that he commiſerates our Caſe, and hath a true and tender ſenſe of our Infirmities and Sufferings, the very manner of his *Interceſſion* for us, as the *Scripture* repreſents it to us, is a plain Demonſtration of the thing: For he intercedes for us in *Heaven* by repreſenting to God his *Father* his Sufferings upon Earth; and pleading them in our behalf: So that the very Argument which he uſeth to God for us cannot but ſtir up compaſſion in Him towards us, and whilſt he repreſents his *Own* Sufferings in our behalf, we cannot think that he is unmindful and inſenſible of *Ours.*

You ſee then that in this *Diſpenſation* of God for our Salvation, by ſending his *Son* in our Nature, things are not only ſuited in great *condeſcenſion* to our *apprehenſions*, but are likewiſe in great compaſſion to us every way fitted for our comfort and encouragement. God hath made him our great *Patron* and *Advocate* who was our *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation.* And ſurely we have all the reaſon in the World to believe, that he who *in the days of his fleſh* humbled himſelf and became *obedient to the death* for our ſakes, will be ready to do us all good offices now that he is advanced to the right hand of God; that he who died for us upon Earth, now that he lives again, will make interceſſion for us in Heaven and perfect that Salvation which he purchaſed for us upon the Croſs.

And

And therefore we find in *Scripture*, that as the *purchasing* of our Salvation is ascribed to the *Death* and *Sufferings* of *Christ*, so the *perfecting* of it is attributed to his *Intercession* for us at the right hand of his *Father*: *Wherefore*, says the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews*, *he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him, seeing he liveth for ever to make intercession for us*: He *dyed once* to purchase these benefits, *but he lives for ever* to procure them for us, and to apply them to us: And now that he is in Heaven, he is as intent upon our Concernments, and lays our Happiness as much to Heart as when he dwelt here among us on Earth, and poured out his Blood a Sacrifice for Sin upon the Cross: And that when he lived here below he suffer'd and was tempted as we are; this very consideration gives us the greatest assurance possible that he is still touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, and hath a lively sense of our Sufferings; and consequently, that he doth compassionate our Case and will use all his power and interest for our advantage, for our seasonable support and succour in all our trials and sufferings. But besides the wonderful *Condescension* of this *Dispensation*, there is likewise in the

*Fifth* and last place, a great *Congruity* and *fitness* in the thing it self; and this *Method* of our Salvation which the Wisdom of God hath pitched upon is in many other respects very much for our real benefit and comfort. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar *Example* of holiness and obedience in our own Nature, by which we plainly see, that God requires nothing of us, but what he himself when he submitted to become Man did think fit to do: For *being made of a Woman*, he was of necessity *made under the Law*, and by assuming *human Nature* he became naturally subject to the *Laws* and conditions of his Being.

And here likewise is a provision made for the *Expiation* and *Forgiveness* of our *Sins*, in a way not only very honourable to the Justice of God and the Authority of his Laws, but likewise very effectual to discountenance Sin and to deter Men from it; since God did not think fit to forgive the Sins of Men without great Sufferings, and that in our Nature: For though God was willing to save the Sinner, yet rather than encouragement should be given to Sin by letting it go unpunish'd, he was contented to give up the *dearly beloved of his Soul* to be a *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*.

By the same means also we have a most powerful Antidote against the fear of Suffering, and particularly against the fear of Death, one of the greatest slaveries of human Nature: So also the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* tells us, *that for this cause* Christ *himself also took part of flesh and blood, that by Death he might destroy him that had the power of Death; that is, the Devil; and might deliver those who through fear of Death were all their life-time subject to bondage*. Heb. 2. 14, 15.

Again, we have hereby full assurance of a blessed Immortality in another Life, because in our Nature Death and all the Powers of Darkness were baffled and overcome. The *Death* of *Christ*, which could not have been without his *Incarnation*, and likewise his *Resurrection* from the dead and his *Ascension* into Heaven, are sensible Demonstrations to all Mankind of a blessed *Immortality* after Death; which is the most powerful motive in the World to Obedience and a holy Life.

And lastly, we may upon this account promise to our selves a fair and equal *Trial* at the *Judgment* of the *great Day*, because we shall then be judged by a Man like our selves. Our *Saviour* and *Judge* himself hath told us, that for this reason *God hath committed all Judgment to the Son, because he is the Son of Man*. And this in human Judgments is accounted a great Priviledge, to be John 5. 25, 27.

be judged by those who are of the same Rank and Condition with our selves, and who are likely to understand best and most carefully to examine and consider all our circumstances, and to render our Case as if it were their own.

So equitably doth God deal with us, that we shall be acquitted or condemned by such a Judge as according to human measures we our selves should have chosen; by One in our own Nature *who was made in all things like unto us*, that only excepted which would have rendered him incapable of being our *Judge*, because it would have made him a *Criminal* like our selves. And therefore the *Apostle* offers this as a firm ground of assurance to us that *God will judge the World in Righteousness*, because this Judgment shall be administred by a *Man* like our selves; *He hath*, saith he, *appointed a Day wherein he will Judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained*, &c.

I shall now only make a practical *Inference* or two from what hath been delivered upon this *Argument* and so conclude this whole *Discourse*.

*First*, The serious consideration of what hath been said concerning the *Incarnation* of our *B. Saviour* should effectually prevail with us to comply with the great End and Design of the *Son of God's* becoming *Man* and *dwelling amongst us*, and of his doing and suffering all those things which are recorded of him in the *History* of his *Life* and *Death* written by the *H. Evangelists*: I say, the consideration hereof should persuade us all to comply with the great *Design* of all this, which is the *Reformation* of Mankind and the *Recovery* of us out of that sinful and miserable estate into which we were fallen: Because the *Salvation* which the *Son of God* hath purchased for us, and which he offers to us by the *Gospel*, is not to be accomplished and brought about any other way than by forsaking our Sins and reforming our *Lives*. *The Grace of God, which hath appeared to all Men and brings Salvation*, will not make us partakers of it in any other way, nor by any other means, than by *teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and to *live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present World*. God *sent his Son* Jesus *to bless us, by turning us away every one from his iniquities*; and unless this change be effectually wrought in us; we are utterly incapable of all the Blessings of the *Gospel* of *Christ*. All that He hath done for us *without us* will avail us nothing, unless we be *inwardly* transformed and *renewed in the spirit of our minds*; unless we become *new Creatures*, unless we make it the continual and sincere endeavour of our lives to *keep the commandments of God*.

Heb. 12. 14. For the *Scripture* is most express and positive in this matter; That *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord:* That *every Man that hath this hope in* 1 Joh. 3. 3. *Him*, that is, in *Christ*, to be saved by *Him*, must *purifie himself even as he is pure*. We do not rightly and truly believe *that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners*, if we be not also throughly convinc'd that it is as necessary for us to leave our Sins, as to believe this most *faithful* and *credible Saying*.

The Obedience and Sufferings of our *B. Saviour* are indeed *accounted to us for Righteousness*, and will most certainly redound to our unspeakable benefit and advantage upon our performance of the *Condition* which the *Gospel* doth require on our Part, *namely*, that *every man that names the Name of Christ depart from iniquity*; And the *Grace* of God's *H. Spirit* is ready to enable us to perform this Condition, if we earnestly ask it, and do sincerely co-operate with it: Provided we do what we can on *our* part, God will not be wanting to us on his. But if we *receive the Grace of God in vain*, and take no care to perform the *Condition*, and do neglect to implore the Grace and assistance

of God's *H. Spirit* to that purpose, we have none to blame but our selves; because it is then wholly our own fault if we fall short of that Happiness which *Christ* hath purchased, and promised to us upon such easie and reasonable *Conditions* as the *Gospel* proposeth.

But I no where find that God hath promised to force Happiness upon the negligent, and a Reward upon the *wicked and slothful Servant:* A *Gift* may be given for nothing, but surely a *Reward* does in the very nature of it always suppose some *Service.* None but *a righteous Man* is capable of *a righteous Man's Reward:* And St. *John* hath sufficiently cautioned us not to think our selves *Righteous* unless we be *doers of righteousness: Little children,* says he, *let no man deceive you, he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* This is so very plain a *Text,* that if Men were not either very easie to be deceived by others, or very willing to deceive themselves, they could not possibly mistake the meaning of it: And therefore I will repeat it once more, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.* 1 Joh. 3.7

*Secondly,* The other *Inference* which I would make from the precedent *Discourse* is this, That with all possible thankfulness we should acknowledge and adore the wonderful Goodness and Condescension of Almighty God in sending his *only begotten Son* into the World in our Nature to be *made flesh,* and to *dwell amongst us* in order to our Recovery and Salvation: A Method and Dispensation not only full of mercy and goodness, but of great Condescension to our meanness, and of mighty vertue and efficacy for our Redemption and Deliverance from the Guilt and Dominion of Sin; and upon all accounts every way so much for our benefit and advantage. So that well may we say with St. *Paul, This is a faithful Saying,* πιστὸς λόγος, a credible Word, *and worthy of all acceptation,* that is, fit to be embraced and entertained with all possible Joy and Thankfulness, *That Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners.*

What an everlasting Fountain of the most invaluable Blessings and Benefits to Mankind is the Incarnation of the Son God? His vouchsafing to assume our Nature, and to reside and converse so long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and *only begotten Son of God* should condescend to do all this for us? That the High and Glorious Majesty of Heaven should stoop down to the Earth, and be contented to be cloathed with Misery and Mortality? That He should submit to so poor and low a Condition, to such dreadful and disgraceful Sufferings for our sakes? For what are *We?* vile and despicable Creatures, Guilty and Unworthy, Offenders and Apostates, Enemies and Rebels. Blessed God! how great is thy Goodness? how infinite are thy tender Mercies and Compassions to Mankind? That thou shouldst regard us whilst we neglected thee, and remember us in our low condition when we had *forgotten thee days without number,* and should'st take such pity on us when we shew'd none to our selves; and whilst we were thy declared and implacable Enemies should'st express more kindness and good will to us, than the best of Men ever did to their best Friends.

When we reflect seriously upon those great things which God hath done in our behalf, and consider that mighty Salvation which God hath wrought for us; what thanks can we possibly render, what acknowledgments shall we ever be able to make, I do not say equal but in any wise meet and becoming, to this great Benefactor of Mankind? Who when we had so highly offended and provok'd Him, and so foolishly and so fatally undone our selves; when we were become so so guilty and so miserable, and so much fitter to have eternally been the objects of his wrath and indignation than of his

pity and compassion, was pleas'd to send his *own*, his *only Son* into the World, to *seek* and *save us*; and by him to repair all our ruines, to *forgive all our iniquities*, to *heal all our* spiritual *diseases, and to crown us with* loving-kindness and tender mercies.

And what Sacrifices of Praise and Thanksgiving should we also offer up to this gracious and most merciful *Redeemer* of ours, *the everlasting Son of the Father*, who debased himself so infinitely for our sakes, and *when he took upon Him to deliver Man did not abhor the Virgins Womb:* Who was contented to be born so obscurely, and to live all his life in a poor and persecuted condition; and was pleased both to undergo and to *overcome the sharpness of Death, that he might open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers?*

Every time we have occasion to meditate upon this, especially when we are communicating at his *H. Table*, and receiving the blessed *Symbols* and *Pledges* of his precious *Death* and *Passion*; How should *our Hearts burn within us* and leap for Joy? How should the remembrance of it revive and raise our Spirits, and put us into an Extasie of Love and Gratitude to this great *Friend and Lover of Souls:* And with the *B. Mother* of our *Lord*, how should *our Souls*, upon that blessed occasion, *magnifie the Lord, and our Spirits rejoyce in God our Saviour?*

The Holy Men of old were transported with Joy at the obscure and confused apprehension and remote foresight of so great a Blessing, at so great a distance: It is said of *Abraham, the Father of the faithful, that he saw His Day afar off and was glad:* How should we then be affected with Joy and Thankfulness, to whom the *Son of God* and *B Saviour* of Men is actually come? *He* is come many ages ago, and hath enlightned a great part of the World with his Glory. Yea, He is come to *us*, who were in a manner separated from the rest of the World: To *Us* is this great *Light* come, who had so long *sate in Darkness and the shadow of Death:* And this *mighty Salvation* which He *hath wrought for us* is near to every one of us that is willing to lay hold of it, and to accept it upon those gracious terms and conditions upon which it is offer'd to us in his *H. Gospel*.

And by his *Coming* he hath delivered Mankind from that gross Ignorance
1 Joh. 1. 20. and *thick Darkness which covered the Nations: And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding to know him that is true: And we are in Him that is* true, *even in his Son Jesus Christ: This is the true God,*
ver. 21. *and eternal Life.* And then it immediately follows, *Little Children, keep your selves from Idols.* What can be the meaning of this Caution? and what is the Connection of it with the foregoing Discourse? It is plainly this: That the *Son of God* by *His Coming* had rescued Mankind from the sottish Worship of *Idols*; and therefore he Cautions *Christians* to take great heed of relapsing into *Idolatry* by worshipping a *Creature*, or the *Image* and likeness of any Creature instead of God. And because he foresaw that it might be objected to *Christians*, as in fact it was afterwards by the *Heathen*, that the Worship of *Christ*, who was a Man, was as much Idolatry as that which the *Christians* charged the *Heathens* withal: Therefore St. *John* effectually to prevent the force of this plausible Objection, though he perpetually, throughout his *Gospel* declares Christ to be really a *Man*, yet he expresly also affirms Him to be *God*, and *the true God*; and consequently, *Christians* might safely pay Divine Worship to *Him* without fear or danger of *Idolatry: We are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ: This is the true God and eternal Life: Little Children, keep your selves from Idols.*

But this am I sensible is a Digression, yet such a one as may not be altogether useless.

To

To proceed then in the recital of those great Blessings which the *Coming* of the *Son of God* hath brought to Mankind. He hath rescued us from the bondage of *Sin*, and from the slavery of *Satan*: He hath openly proclaimed Pardon and Reconciliation to the World: He hath clearly revealed eternal Life to us, which was but obscurely made known before, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*; *but is now made manifest by the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light by the Gospel*: He hath purchased this great Blessing for us; and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our Sins and to be saved by Him: A Condition without which as Salvation is not to be had, so if it were, it would not be desirable, it could not make us happy; because our Sins would still separate between God and us, and the guilt and horrour of our own Minds would make us eternally miserable.

And now surely we cannot but thus judge, that all the Praises and Acknowledgments, all the Service and Obedience which we can possibly render to Him, are infinitely beneath those infinite Obligations which the *Son of God* hath laid upon the Sons of Men by his *Coming into the World to save Sinners*.

What then remains, but that at all times, and more especially at this *Season* we gratefully acknowledge and joyfully commemorate this great and amazing Goodness of God to us, in the *Incarnation* of his *Son* for the Redemption and Salvation of the sinful and miserable Race of Mankind? A Method and Dispensation of the Divine Grace and Wisdom, not only full of mercy and condescension, but of great power and vertue to purifie our Hearts and to reform our Lives; to beget in us a fervent love of *God our Saviour*, and a perfect hatred and detestation of our Sins, and a stedfast purpose and resolution to lead a new Life, following the Commandments of God, and walking in his ways all the days of our life. In a word, a Method that is every way calculated for our unspeakable Benefit and Comfort.

Since then the *Son of God* hath so graciously condescended to be *made in all things like unto us, Sin only excepted*; let us aspire to be as like to Him as is possible in the exemplary Holiness and Vertues of his Life. We cannot be like Him in his Miracles, but we may in his Mercy and Compassion: We cannot imitate his Divine Power, but we may resemble Him in his Innocency and Humility, in his Meekness and Patience. And as He assumed Human Nature, so let us re-assume Humanity which we have in great measure depraved and put off; and let us *put on bowels of mercy* towards those that are in misery, and be ready to relieve the poor for *His* sake, *who being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*

To conclude, Let us imitate *Him* in *that* which was his great Work and Business here upon Earth, and which of all other did best become the *Son of God*; I mean, in His *going about doing good*: That by *giving Glory to God in the Highest*, and by endeavouring as much as in us lies, to procure and promote *Peace on Earth, and Good Will amongst Men*, we may at last be *made meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*: Through the Mercies and Merits of our *B. Saviour* and *Redeemer*. *Amen.*

*Almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our Nature upon Him, and as at this Time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate and made thy Children by Adoption and* Grace, *may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the same Spirit, ever one* God, *world without end.* Amen.

# SERMON XLVII.

Concerning the

## *Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Christ, &c.*

### HEB. IX. 26.

*But now once hath he appeared in the end of the World, to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.*

AMONG many other great Ends and Reasons for which God was pleased to send his Son into the World to dwell amongst us, this was one of the chief, that by a long course of the greatest innocency and the greatest sufferings in our Nature he might be capable to make a perfect Expiation of Sin: *But now once in the end of the World*, ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, in the conclusion of the Ages, that is, in the last Age of the World, which is the *Gospel* Age, *hath he appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.*

The general Design of God in the sending his Son into the World was to save Mankind from eternal death and misery, and to purchase for us eternal
Joh. 3. 16. life and happinerss. So the *Author* of our Salvation himself tells us, That *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,*

Now in order to the procuring of this Salvation for us, the impediments and hindrances of it were to be removed: these were the *guilt*, and the *dominion* of Sin: By the *guilt* of Sin we were become obnoxtious to the wrath of God and to eternal condemnation, and by the *defilement* and *dominion* of it we were incapable of the happiness of Heaven and the reward of eternal Life.

To remove these two great Hindrances, two things were necessary: The Forgiveness of sins past in order to our deliverance from the wrath of God and the eternal torments of the next Life; and the Reformation of our hearts and lives to make us capable of eternal Life and Happiness in another World. And both these, if God had so pleased, might for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of God, without this wonderful method and dispensation of sending his Son in our Nature *to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself*: But it seems the wisdom of God thought fit to pitch upon this way and method of our Salvation, and no doubt for very good *Reasons*; amongst which these *three* seem to be very obvious and very considerable.

*First*, To vindicate the honour of his Laws, which if Sin had gone altogether unpunish'd would have been in great danger of falling into contempt. For if God had proclaimed a general Pardon of Sin to all Mankind without any testimony of his wrath and displeasure against it, who would have had any great veneration for his Laws, or have believed in good earnest, that the violation of them had been either so extremely offensive to him, or so very dangerous to the Sinner?

There-

Therefore to maintain the honour of his Laws, rather than Sin should pass unpunish'd, God would lay the punishment of it upon his only begotten Son, the dearest Person to him in the World: Which is a greater testimony of his high displeasure against Sin, and of his tender regard and concernment for the honour of his Laws, than if the Sinner had suffered the punishment due to it in his own person.

*Secondly*, Another Reason of this Dispensation, and that likewise very considerable, was, that God might forgive Sin in such a way as yet effectually to discountenance and discourage it, and to create in us the greatest horror and hatred of it: Which could not have been by an absolute Pardon, without any punishment inflicted, or satisfaction made to the honour of his Justice. For had Sin been so easily forgiven, who would have been sensible of the great evil of it, or afraid to offend for the future?

But when God makes his own Son a Sacrifice, and lays upon him the punishment due for the Iniquities of us all, this is a demonstration that God hates Sin as much, if it be possible, as he loved his own Son. For this plainly shews what Sin deserves, and what the Sinner may justly expect, if after this severity of God against it he will venture to commit it.

And if this Sacrifice for Sin, and the Pardon purchased by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from Sin, and to beget in us an eternal dread and detestation of it: If we sin wilfully after so clear a Revelation of the *wrath of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men*, there remains *no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries.* For what could God do more to testifie his displeasure against sin, and to discountenance the practice of it, than to make his only Son an Offering for Sin, and to give him up to be wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities? In what clearer Glass can we at once behold the great evil and demerit of Sin, and the infinite goodness and mercy of God to Sinners, than in the sorrows and sufferings of the Son of God for our Sins and for our sakes?

*Thirdly*, Another Reason of this Dispensation seems to have been a gracious condescension and compliance of Almighty God with a certain apprehension and persuasion, which had very early and universally obtained among Mankind, concerning the expiation of Sin and appeasing the offended Deity by Sacrifices: By the Sacrifices of living Creatures, of Birds and Beasts; and afterwards by human Sacrifices and *the blood of their Sons and Daughters*: by offering to God, as the expression is in the *Prophet*, *their first-born for their transgression, and the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls.*

And this Notion of the expiation of Sin by Sacrifice, whether it had its first Rise from *Divine Revelation*, and was afterwards propagated from Age to Age by *Tradition*: I say, from whence soever this Notion came, it hath of all other Notions concerning Religion, excepting those of the *Being* of God and his *Providence*, and of the *Recompences* of *another Life*, found the most universal reception, and the thing hath been the most generally practised in all Ages and Nations, not only in the *old*, but in the *new* discovered parts of the World.

And indeed a very great part of the *Jewish* Religion, which was instituted by God himself, seems to have been a plain condescension to the general Apprehension of Mankind, concerning this way of appeasing the offended Deity by Sacrifices: As it was also a Figure of that great and efficacious Sacrifice which should in due time be offered to God to make atonement once for all the Sins of Mankind.

And the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* doth very particularly insist upon this

condescension of God to them, in the Dispensation of the Gospel: and whereas they apprehended so great a necessity of an *High-Priest* and of *Sacrifices* to make expiation for the sins of the People, that it was an establish'd *Principle* among them, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission of Sins*; God was pleased to comply so far with these Notions and Apprehensions of theirs, as to make his own Son both a *Priest* and a *Sacrifice*, to do that once for all which their own *High-Priest* pretended to do *year by year*.

And from hence the same *Apostle* takes occasion to recommend to them the *new Covenant* and *Dispensation* of the *Gospel*, as having a greater and more perfect *High-Priest* and a more excellent *Sacrifice*, than were the *High-Priests* and the *Sacrifices* under the *Law*; the *Son of God* having *by one Sacrifice of himself obtained eternal Redemption for us, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

And this Apprehension prevailed no less in the *Heathen* World, and proceeded to the Sacrifices of Men, even of their *first-born*. And with this Apprehension, not to countenance but to abolish it, God was pleased to comply so far as to make a general Attonement for the Sins of Mankind by the Death of his Son, appearing in our Nature to become a voluntary Sacrifice for us: God permitting him to be unjustly put to death and his Blood to be shed by the malice of Men, in appearance as a Malefactor, but in truth as a Martyr; and accepting of his Death as a meritorious Sacrifice and *propitiation for the Sins of the whole World:* That by this wise counsel and permission of his Providence he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhuman way of serving God which had been so long in use and practice among them: The Son of God by the voluntary Sacrifice of himself having effected all that at once, and for ever, which Mankind from the beginning of the World had in vain been endeavouring to accomplish by innumerable and continual Sacrifices; namely, the pardon of their Sins, and perfect Peace and Reconciliation with God.

For these Ends and Reasons, and perhaps for many more as great and considerable as these which our shallow understandings are not able to fathom the Wisdom of God hath pitched upon this way and method of delivering Mankind from the guilt and dominion of Sin by the Sacrifice of his Son. And to this end it was requisite that he should appear in our Nature and dwell amongst us for some considerable time, that by a long course of the greatest Innocency and of the greatest Sufferings in our Nature he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of Sin.

So that *two* things were requisite to qualifie him for this purpose; perfect *Innocency* and *Obedience*, and great *Sufferings* in our Nature, even to the suffering of Death. Both these the *Scripture* declares to be necessary qualifications of a Person capable to make expiation of Sin; and both these were found in the Person of our *B. Saviour*.

*First*, Unspotted *Innocency* and perfect *Obedience*. This the *Scripture* testifies concerning Him, and the whole course of his Life and Actions. *He*
Heb. 4. 15. *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin*, saith the *Apostle* to the
Joh. 8. 29. *Hebrews*. *He always did the things which pleased God*, as he testifies con-
1 Pet. 2. 22. cerning himself, *and we are sure that his witness is true*. *He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, as St. *Peter* tells us of Him. And this was necessary to qualifie him for the perfect expiation of Sin, whether we consider Him as a *Priest*, or as a *Sacrifice*.

As a *Priest*, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the Sins of others, had he not been without sin himself. And this the *Apostle* tells us, is one great Advantage of our *High-Priest* under the *Gospel*, above the *High-*

*Priest* under the *Law*, who being a Sinner himself, as well as those for whom he offer'd, had need to offer for himself before he could make somuch as a Legal expiation for the Sins of others: But a perfect and effectual expiation of Sin, so as to purge the Conscience from the guilt of it, cannot be made but by an High-Priest who is holy and innocent himself; *For such an High-Priest*, saith the *Apostle*, *became us*, that is, now under the Dispensation of the *Gospel*, when a perfect expiation of Sins is to be made, *such an High-Priest* is necessary, *as is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners, who needs not as those High-Priests*, that is, as the High-Priests under the Law, *to offer up sacrifice first for his own Sins, and then for the People*: The plain force of which Argument is this, that he who will be qualified to make atonement for the Sins of others must be without sin himself. Heb. 7. 26, 27.

And then if we consider *Christ* as a *Sacrifice* for Sin; perfect holiness is necessary to make a Sacrifice acceptable and available for the expiation of Sin. The necessity of this was typified by the quality of the *expiatory Sacrifices* under the *Law*: the *Beasts* that were to be offered were to be *without spot and blemish*: To which the *Apostle* alludes, speaking of the quality and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Christ*: *How much more*, says he, *shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God?* And to the same purpose St. *Peter*, *Forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot*, &c. hereby intimating, that nothing less than the perfect innocency and holiness of him who was to be a Sacrifice for us could have expiated the guilt of our sins, and purchased eternal Redemption for us. Heb. 9. 14 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19.

*Secondly*, Great *Sufferings* likewise in our Nature, even to the suffering of Death, were requisite to the perfect expiation of Sin: I say, even to the suffering of Death. For the Sacrifices which were to make expiation, were to be slain. And it was a constant *Maxim* and principle among the *Jews*, and the *Apostle* more than once in this *Epistle* seems to allow and confirm it, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission of Sins.*

Not that God could not have pardoned Sin without satisfaction made to his Justice, either by the suffering of the Sinner himself, or of a Sacrifice in his stead: But, according to the Method and Dispensation which the Wisdom of God had pitched upon, he was resolved not to dispense Forgiveness in any other way. For which reason he seems either to have possess'd Mankind with this *Principle*, or to have permitted them to be so persuaded, that *Sin was not to be expiated but by Blood*, that is, either by the Death of the Sinner, or of the Sacrifice.

Now the Life of our *B. Saviour*, as well as his Death, was made up of Sufferings of one kind or other: Continual Sufferings from his Cradle to his Cross, from the time he drew his first breath to his giving up of the ghost: And not only continual Sufferings, but the greatest that ever were, considering the Dignity of the Person that suffered, and the nature of the Sufferings: Considering likewise that these Sufferings were not only wholly undeserved on his part, but unmerited also on ours, for whose sake he submitted himself to them: Nay, on the contrary, he had obliged to the utmost those for whom and by whom he suffered, and continued still to oblige them by the greatest Blessings and Benefits purchased and procured for them by those very Sufferings which with so much Malice and Cruelty they inflicted on him.

Had our *B. Saviour* been a mere Man, the perfect Innocency and unspotted Purity of his whole Life; his Zeal to do the Will of God, and his delight in doing it; his infinite pains and unwearied diligence in *going about doing good*: His constant Obedience to God in the most difficult Instances, and his perseverance in well-doing, notwithstanding the ill usage and hard measure, the bitter Reproaches and Persecutions he met withal for it, from a wicked and ill-natur'd World: His perfect submission to the Will of God, his invincible Patience under the greatest and bitterest Sufferings, and his infinite Charity to his Enemies and Persecutors: These must needs be highly acceptable to God, and if Man could merit of God, likely enough to be available for the Sins of others.

But our *Saviour* and our *Sacrifice* being the *Son of God* in our Nature: and He voluntarily assuming it, and submitting to the condition of Humanity in its lowest and most miserable state, Sin only excepted; and his being contented to live a Life of doing good and suffering evil, and at last to be put to Death and slain a Sacrifice for us: The Dignity of the Person who did and suffered all this for us, and his dearness to God, must needs add a mighty value to so perfect an Obedience and such patient Sufferings; so as to render them a full, perfect and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World.

And all this being willingly performed in our Nature, and accepted by God as done upon our account, may reasonably be presumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we our selves had performed it in our own persons: Nothing being so proper, and so available to make an *honourable amends* and satisfaction to the Justice of God for the Sins of all Mankind, as the voluntary Obedience and Sufferings of Human Nature in a Person of so great Dignity and dearness to God as his eternal and entirely beloved Son.

Now that Expiation of Sin was made by the Sufferings of *Christ* in our stead, I shall endeavour to make good these *three* ways.

*First*, From plain Testimonies of *H. Scripture*, declaring this matter to us as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it.

*Secondly*, From the nature and intention of *Expiatory Sacrifices*, both among the *Jews* and Heathen; to which the Death of *Christ* is in the *New Testament* so frequently compared, and in point of vertue and efficacy to take away Sin infinitely preferred to it.

*Thirdly*, By vindicating this Method and Dispensation of the Divine Wisdom from the Objections which are brought against it; and by showing that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any wise unworthy of God.

I. I. I shall produce some plain Testimonies of *H. Scripture* which declare this matter as clearly and fully as it is possible for words to do it; namely, that the *Son of God*, in order to the effectual *Expiation* of Sin, suffered in our stead, and bore the wrath of God for us, and made a perfect Atonement for Sin, and obtained eternal Redemption for us.

This the *Scripture* declares to us in great variety of expressions; as, that *Christ died for us*, and *for our Sins*; that he was *a Sacrifice for us*, and *a propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*; that is, of all Mankind; that *he bare our Sins in his own body on the Tree*, and *appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself*; that *we are justified in his blood*, and *redeemed by the price of it*; and in very many other expressions to the same purpose.

And

And this is so evidently the scope and meaning of these Expressions, that it cannot be denied without offering the greatest violence imaginable to the *H. Scriptures*. For can any Man think that God would have used so many expressions in *Scripture*, the plain and most obvious sense of all which is, that the *Son of God* suffered for our Sins and in our stead, if this had not been his design and meaning? Would not this be in effect to say, that God had written a great Book to puzzle and confound, but not to instruct and teach Mankind?

I will at present single out some few of those many *Texts* of *Scripture* which might be produced to this purpose: *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin*; that is, he hath made him who had no sin himself a Sacrifice for our sins. Again; *and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God*. St *Peter* to the same purpose tells us, that *Christ also hath once suffered for Sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh*: Here *Christ* is said to have *suffered for Sin*; and to declare, that the *Apostle* did not only mean that *Christ* suffered upon the occasion of our Sins, but that he suffered in the place and stead of the Sinner; he adds, *the just for the unjust*; that is, the Son of God, who was innocent and had no Sin, suffered for us who were Sinners; or as it is elsewhere express'd, *he bare our sins in his own body on the Tree*. 2 Cor. 5. 21. Eph. 5. 10. 1 Pet. 1. 18

It is true indeed, that *Christ* suffered for our benefit and advantage; which the *Socinians* would have to be all that is meant in the *Texts* which I have cited: But then it ought to de considered, that *Christ*'s suffering for our benefit and advantage does by no means exclude, nor is any wise inconsistent with his suffering in our stead. For whoever suffers in another Man's stead, and to save him from suffering, does undoubtedly suffer for his benefit and advantage, and gives the best demonstration of it that can be: But the manner of the expression, if compared with other parallel *Texts* of *Scripture*, and especially with what is so often said of our *Saviour*'s being a *Sacrifice*, which I shall have occasion further to urge by and by: I say, the manner of the expression, if well considered, will appear to any Man that is not contentious to signifie our *Saviour*'s suffering instead of the Sinner.

But not to argue from words and phrases, I will produce two *Texts* which declare this matter so plainly, that the force of them is not to be avoided without the most shameful wresting and perverting of them. *This is my Commandment*, says our *Saviour*, *that you love one another, as I have loved you.* How is that? he declares in the next words, *Greater love than this hath no Man, that a Man lay down his life for his friend*; that is, that he be contented to die in his stead. And to the same purpose St. *Paul*, *For when ye were yet Sinners in due time Christ died for the ungodly*: Now the question is, whether by this expression of *Christ's dying for the ungodly* be meant only his dying for the benefit and advantage of Sinners, but not his dying in their stead? This, let the words which immediately follow determine: *For scarcely for a righteous Man will one dye, yet peradventure for a good Man one would even dare to dye: But God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet Sinners Christ died for us.* And now I appeal to any Man of good sense, whether it be not plain that the *Apostle* here speaks of *Christ*'s dying for sinners in the same sense as one Man is said to dye for another; that is, to save another from death; which what is it else but to dye in his stead? He that can deny this, is perverse to the highest degree, and I fear almost beyond the possibility of being convinced. Joh. 15. 12. ver. 13. Rom. 6. 6, 8, 7.

And

And the Argument from these two *Texts* is so much the stronger, because we do not here reason merely from the phrase and expression; but from the main Scope of our *Saviour*'s discourse in the *one*, and of St. *Paul*'s in the other. For the design of both is to recommend the Superlative love of *Christ* to us above the greatest love that ever any Man express'd to another. The highest pitch that human affection did ever rise to, was for a Man to lay down his life for his Friend; but the *Son of God* laid down his life for his Enemies. *Scarcely*, says St. *Paul*, *would one lay down his life for a righteous Man*, that is, for one who is but strictly, just and honest, and does no body wrong; but for a *good Man*, that is, for one that is kind and beneficial to all, and hath obliged Mankind by great Benefits, some one may be found that would lay down his life to save the life of such a Person: But the love of *Christ* hath gone far beyond this: He *dyed for Sinners*, for those who were neither *good Men* nor *righteous*: *But God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet Sinners Christ dyed for us.* Now where doth the force of this Argument lye, if not in this? that *Christ* hath done that for us, who were *Enemies* and *Sinners*, which some very few persons in the World have done for their *Friend*, or for some very eminently *good Man*: And what is that? Why, they have laid down their lives in their stead: And so *Christ* hath done for us. This seems to be so very plain, that I do not see how the force of this Argument is possible to be avoided.

It is evident then from *Scripture*, that *Christ* dyed not only for our advantage but in our stead; as truly and really as any Man ever did or can dye for one another who lays down his own life to save another from death. For if *Christ* had not dyed, we had perished everlastingly; and because he dyed we are saved from eternal Death and Misery.

And though this be no where in *Scripture* spoken of by the name or *term* of *Satisfaction*, yet it is said to be the *price* of our *Redemption*; which surely is the same in effect with *Satisfaction*. For as we are Sinners we are liable, and, as I may say, indebted to the Justice of God: And the Son of God, by his Death and Sufferings in our Nature, hath discharged this obligation, and paid this debt for us: Which discharge, since it was obtained for us by the shedding of *Christ*'s blood, and the *Scripture* tells us, that *without shedding of blood there is no remission of Sins*: And since God is graciously pleased to accept of it for the Debt which we owed to his Justice, and to declare himself fully pleased and contented with it, why it may not properly enough be called *payment* or *satisfaction*, I confess, I am not able to understand. Men may eternally wrangle about any thing, but what a frivolous contention, what a trifling in serious matters, what *barretrie* in *Divinity* is this?

Not that God was *angry* with his *Son*, when he thus *laid on him the iniquities of us all*: No, he was always well pleased with him; and never better, than when he *became obedient to the Death, even the Death of the Cross*, and *bore our Sins in his own body on the Tree.*

Nor yet that our *Saviour* suffered the very same that the Sinner should have suffered, namely, the proper Pains and Torment of the Damned: But that his Obedience and Sufferings were of that value and esteem with God, and his voluntary Sacrifice of himself so well-pleasing to him, that he thereupon entred into a Covenant of Grace and Mercy with Mankind, wherein he hath engaged himself to forgive the Sins of those who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence the *Blood of Christ* which was shed for us upon the *Cross* is called *the Blood of the Covenant*, as being the *Sanction* of that *New Covenant*, into which God is entred with Mankind: and not only the *Sanction* and *Confirmation* of that *Covenant*,

but

but the very *Foundation* of it: For which reason the *Cup* in the *Lord's Supper* is called *the New Testament*, or, as the word should rather be rendred, *the New Covenant in his Blood, which was shed for many for the remission of Sins.* I proceed now to the

II^d. Thing propounded, which was, to shew that the Expiation of our Sins was made by the Sufferings of Christ, from the *nature* and *intention* of *Expiatory Sacrifices*, both among the *Jews* and *Heathen*; to which the *Death of Christ* is in the *New Testament* so frequently compared, and in point of vertue and efficacy to take away Sin infinitely preferr'd to it. II.

Now the nature and design of *Expiatory Sacrifices* was plainly this: To substitute one *Living Creature* to suffer and die instead of another, so that what the Sinner deserv'd to have suffered was supposed to be done to the Sacrifice, that is, it was slain to make an atonement for the Sinner,

And though there was no reason to hope for any such effect from the Blood of *Bulls*, or *Goats*, or of any other *Living Creatures* that were wont to be offered up in Sacrifice; yet that both *Jews* and *Heathen* did expect and hope for it, is so very evident, that it cannot without extreme Ignorance or Obstinacy be deny'd.

But this expectation, how unreasonable soever, plainly shews it to have been the common Apprehension of Mankind, in all Ages, that, God would not be appeased, nor should Sin be pardoned without Suffering: but yet so that Men generally conceived good hopes, that upon the Repentance of Sinners God would accept of a *vicarious* punishment; that is, of the Suffering of some other in their stead. And very probably, as I said before, in compliance with this Apprehension of Mankind, and in condescension to it, as well as for other weighty Reasons best known to the Divine Wisdom, God was pleased to find out such a Sacrifice as should really and effectually procure for them that great Blessing of the Forgiveness of Sins which they had so long hoped for from the multitude of their own Sacrifices.

And the *Apostle* to the *Hebrews* doth in a large Discourse shew the great vertue and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Christ*, to the purpose of Remission of Sins, above that of the Sacrifices under the Law: And that the Death of *Christ* is really and effectually to our advantage all that which the Sacrifices under the Law were supposed to be to the Sinner: *But now once*, saith the *Apostle* here in the *Text*, *in the end of the World, hath he appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.* This is the great vertue and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Christ*, that whatever was expected from any other Sacrifices, either by *Jews* or *Heathens*, was really effected by this.

This was plainly signified by the *Jewish Passover*, wherein the *Lamb* was slain, and the *Sinner* did *escape*, and was *pass'd by*. In allusion whereto St. *Paul* makes no scruple to call *Christ* our *Passover* or *Paschal Lamb*, who was *slain* that we might *escape: Christ our Passover*, says he, *is slain*, or *offer'd for us*; that is, He by the gracious appointment of God was substituted to suffer all that in our stead which the *Paschal Lamb* was supposed to suffer for the *Sinner*. 1 Cor. 5. 7.

And this was likewise signified by the Sinner's laying his hand upon the Sacrifice that was to be slain, thereby as it were transferring the punishment which was due to himself upon the Sacrifice that was to be slain and offered up. For so God tells *Moses*, that the Sinner, who came to offer an Expiatory Sacrifice should do: *He shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him, to make an Atonement for him.* Lev. 1. 4. And the *Apostle* tells us, that it was an established Principle in the *Jewish*

Religion, that *without shedding of blood there was no remission of Sins:* Which plainly shews, that they expected this Benefit of the Remission of Sins, from the Blood of their Sacrifices.

And then he tells us, that we are really made partakers of this Benefit by the Blood of *Christ*, and by the vertue of his Sacrifice: And again, *Christ*, Heb. 9. 28. says he, *was once offered to bear the Sins of many*; plainly alluding to the Sacrifices under the Law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the Sinner.

And that this expression of *Christ's* being *offered to bear our Sins*, cannot be meant of his taking away our Sins by his holy Doctrine which was confirmed by his Death, but of his bearing our Sins by way of *imputation*, and by his suffering for them in our stead, as the Sacrifice was supposed to do for the Sinner; This, I say, is evident beyond all denial from the opposition which follows, after the *Text*, between his *first* Appearance and his *se-*
v. 28. *cond*; *Christ*, says our *Apostle*, *was once offered to bear our Sins*; *but unto them that look for him he shall appear a second time without Sin unto Salvation.* Why? Did he not appear the first time without Sin? Yes certainly, as to any inherent guilt; for the *Scripture* tells us, *he had no Sin.* What then is the meaning of the opposition, That at his *first* Coming *he bore our Sins*, but at his *second* Coming *he shall appear without Sin unto Salvation?* These words can have no other imaginable sense but this, that at his *first* Coming he sustain'd the Person of a Sinner and suffered instead of us; but his *second* Coming shall be upon another account, and *he shall appear without Sin unto Salvation*; that is, not as a *Sacrifice*, but as a *Judge*, to confer the Reward of Eternal Life upon those who are partakers of the benefit of that *Sacrifice* which he offered to God for us *in the days of his Flesh.* I proceed to the.

III. III.d Thing I proposed, and which yet remains to be spoken to; namely, to vindicate this Method and *Dispensation* of the *Divine Wisdom* from the *Objections* which are brought against it; and to shew that there is nothing in it that is unreasonable, or any wise unworthy of God, I shall mention *four Objections* which are commonly urged in this matter, and I think they are all that are considerable.

Ob. 1st. *First*, That this Method, of the *Expiation* of Sin by the Sufferings of *Christ*, seems to argue some defect and want of Goodness in God, as if he needed some external Motive, and were not of himself disposed to forgive Sinners.

To which I think the *Answer* is not difficult, namely, that God did not want Goodness to have forgiven Sin freely and without any Satisfaction, but his Wisdom did not think it meet to give encouragement to Sin by too easie a forgiveness, and without some remarkable testimony of his severe displeasure against it: And therefore his greater Goodness and Compassion to Mankind devised this way to save the Sinner, without giving the least countenance and encouragement to Sin.

For God to think of saving us any way, was excessive Goodness and Mercy; but to think of doing it in this way, by substituting his dearly beloved Son to suffer in our stead, is a Condescension so very amazing, that if God had not been pleased of his own Goodness to stoop to it, it had almost been Blasphemy in Man to have thought of it, or desired it.

Obj 2d. *Secondly*, How can our Sins be said to have been forgiven *freely*, if the Pardon of them was purchased at so dear a rate and so mighty a Price was paid for it?

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In *Answer* to this I desire these *two* things may be considered. 1*st*. That it is a wonderful grace and favour of God to admit of this translation of the Punishment which was due to us, and to accept of the Sufferings of another in our stead, and for our benefit; when he might justly have exacted it of us in our own Persons: So that, even in this respect, we are, as St. *Paul* says, *justified freely by his grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ*: And *freely* too in respect of any necessity that lay upon God to forgive us in this or any other way. It was a free act of his Goodness to save us, even by the Satisfaction and Sufferings of his own Son. 2*dly*. It was in effect freely too, notwithstanding the mighty Price which was paid for our Redemption. Because this Price was not of our own procuring, but of God's providing; He *found out this Ransom for us*. And will any Man say, that a Prince who prevails with his Son to intercede for the Pardon of a Rebel, yea and to suffer some punishment or to pay a Fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect and in all equitable and grateful construction forgive him freely?

*Thirdly*, It is yet further objected, That this seems to be more unreasonable than the sacrificing of *Beasts* among the *Jews*, nay, than the sacrificing of *Men* among the *Heathen*, and even of their *own Sons and Daughters*: Because this is the offering up of the *Son of God*, the most innocent and the most excellent Person that ever was. *Obj* 3*d*.

To which I answer, that if we consider the *manner*, and the *design* of it, the thing will appear to be quite otherwise.

As to the *manner* of it, God did not command his Son to be sacrificed, but his Providence permitted the Wickedness and Violence of Men to put him to death. And then his Goodness and Wisdom did over-rule this worst of Actions to the best of Ends. And if we consider the matter aright, how is this any more a reflection upon the Holy Providence of God, than any Enormities and Cruelties which by his permission are daily committed in the World?

And then if we consider the *End* and *Design* of this permission of *Christ's* Death, and the application of it to the purpose of a general Expiation; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful Design of it. For by this means God did at once put an end to that unreasonable and bloody way of Worship, which had been so long practis'd in the World: And after this one Sacrifice, which was so infinitely dear to God, the benefit of Expiation was not to be expected in any other way; all other Sacrifices being worthless and vain in comparison of this: And it hath ever since obtained this effect, of making all other Sacrifices to cease, in all Parts of the World where *Christianity* hath prevailed.

*Fourthly*, The last *Objection* is, the Injustice and Cruelty of an Innocent Person's suffering instead of the Offender. *Obj* 4*th*.

To this I answer, That they who make so great a noise with this *Objection* do seem to me to give a full and clear *Answer* to it themselves, by acknowledging, as they constantly and expresly do, that our *Saviour* suffered all this for our *benefit* and *advantage*, though not in our *place and stead*. For this, to my apprehension, is plainly to give up the Cause, unless they can shew a good reason why there is not as much Injustice and Cruelty in an Innocent Person's suffering for the benefit and advantage of a Malefactor, as in his suffering in his stead: So little do Men, in the heat of dispute and opposition, who are resolv'd to hold fast an Opinion in despite of Reason and good Sense, consider, that they do many times in effect, and by necessary consequence, grant the very thing which in express terms they do so stifly and pertinaciously deny.

The truth of the matter is this; there is nothing of Injuſtice or Cruelty in either Caſe; neither in an innocent Perſon's ſuffering for the *benefit* of an Offender, nor in his *ſtead*; ſuppoſing the Suffering to be voluntary: But they have equally the ſame appearance of Injuſtice and Cruelty: Nor can I poſſibly diſcern any reaſon why Injuſtice and Cruelty ſhould be objected in the one Caſe more than in the other, there being every whit as little reaſon why an *Innocent Perſon* ſhould ſuffer for the *benefit* of a *Criminal*, as why he ſhould ſuffer in his *ſtead*. So that I hope this *Objection*, which above all the reſt hath been ſo loudly and ſo invidiouſly urged, hath receiv'd a juſt *Anſwer*.

And I believe, if the matter were ſearch'd to the bottom, all this perverſe contention, about our Saviour's ſuffering for our *benefit* but not in our *ſtead*, will ſignifie juſt nothing. For if *Chriſt* died for our *benefit* ſo as ſome way or other, by vertue of his Death and Sufferings, to ſave us from the wrath of God and to procure our eſcape from eternal Death; this, for ought I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our *ſtead*. For he that dies with an intention to do that *benefit* to another as to ſave him from Death, doth certainly to all intents and purpoſes dye in his place and *ſtead*.

And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the Controverſie is at an end; and both ſides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phraſe and manner of expreſſion: which is to ſeek a quarrel and an occaſion of difference where there is no real ground for it: A thing which ought to be very far from reaſonable and peaceable Minds.

For the *Socinians* ſay, that our *Saviour*'s voluntary Obedience and Sufferings did procure his Exaltation at the right hand of God, and Power and Authority to forgive Sins, and to give eternal Life to as many as he pleaſed: So that they grant that his Obedience and Sufferings, in the meritorious conſequence of them, do redound to our *Benefit* and advantage as much as we pretend and ſay they do; only they are loth in expreſs terms to acknowledge that *Chriſt* died in our *ſtead*: And this, for no other reaſon, that I can imagine, but becauſe they have denied it ſo often and ſo long.

But I appeal to the Ingenuity of our *Adverſaries*, whether this do not in the laſt iſſue come all to one; and be not, on their part, a mere Controverſie about words; For ſuppoſe a Malefactor condemned to ſome grievous puniſhment, and the King's Son to ſave him from it is contented to ſubmit to great diſgrace and ſufferings: In reward of which Sufferings the King takes his Son into his Throne and ſets him at his own right hand, and gives him power to pardon this Malefactor, and upon a fitting Submiſſion and Repentance to advance him to honour: Will not any Man in this Caſe allow, that the King's Son ſuffered inſtead of this Malefactour, and ſmile at any Man that ſhall be ſo nice as to grant that indeed he *ſuffered* for him, but yet to deny that he was *puniſh'd* for him, to allow that he bore the inconvenience of his faults, but yet obſtinately to ſtand it out that the faults of this Malefactour were not laid upon him, or in any wiſe ſo imputed to him that he can be ſaid to have ſuffered in his ſtead? This is juſt the Caſe, and the difference in reality, and in the laſt reſult of things is nothing but words.

Thus far have I tried your patience in a contentious Argument; in which I take no pleaſure, but yet ſhall be glad if I may be ſo happy as by any thing that hath been ſaid to contribute towards the putting an end to ſo unhappy a Controverſie, which hath troubled the World ſo long, and raiſed ſuch a duſt that very few have been able to ſee clearly through it.

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However I cannot dismiss this Argument without making some useful but very short reflection upon this great Doctrine of our Religion, namely, That the Son of God being made a Sacrifice for us, and exposed to such bitter Sufferings and so cruel a Death for the Expiation of our Sins, should create in us the greatest dread and detestation of Sin, and for ever deter us from all wilful transgression and disobedience. For if the guilt of our Sins was done away upon such hard terms and cost the dearly beloved Son of God so much sweat and blood, then surely we ought to take great heed how by our renewed Provocations we renew his Passion, and do what in us lies to *crucifie to our selves the* Son *of* God *afresh, and to put him to an open shame.*

If God did so terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his Soul for our sakes; if the Son of God was so grievously *wounded for our transgressions*, and so sorely *bruised for our iniquities:* If so fearful a Storm of Vengeance fell upon the most innocent Person that ever was for our Sins, then we have reason to take that kind and merciful admonition of the Son of God to Sinners, to *sin no more, lest a worse thing,* if it be possible, *come upon* our selves

In this Dispensation of God's Grace and Mercy to Mankind, by the Death of his Son, God seems to have gone to the very extremity of things, and almost further than Goodness and Justice will well admit; to afflict Innocency it self to save the Guilty: And if herein God hath expressed his hatred of Sin in such a wonderful way of Love and Kindness to the Sons of Men as looks almost like hatred of Innocency and his own Son: This ought in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious Redeemer, who *was made a curse for us*, and *loved us* to that degree as to *wash us from our Sins in his own Blood:* I say, This ought to beget in us a greater displeasure against Sin, and a more perfect detestation of it, than if we had suffered the punishment due to it, in our own Persons: For in this Case, we could only have been displeased at our Selves and our Sins as the just Cause of our Sufferings: but in the other, we ought to hate Sin as the unhappy occasion of the saddest Misfortune and sorest Calamities to the *best Man*, that ever was, and to our *best Friend*, for our Sins and for our Sakes.

Since then the *Son of God* hath so graciously condescended to be *made in all things* like unto us, *Sin only excepted*; let us aspire as much as is possible, to become like to Him: Above all, let us hate and avoid Sin as the only thing in which the Son of God would have no part with us, though he was contented to suffer such bitter things to save us from the Defilement and Dominion of it, from the Punishment and all the dismal consequences of it.

*He had no Sin*, but God was pleased to *lay upon him the iniquities of us all*, and *to make his Soul an offering for Sin*, and to permit all that to be done to Him which was due to us: He was contented to be sacrificed once for all Mankind, that Men might for ever cease from that inhuman and ineffectual way of sacrificing one another, whereby instead of *expiating* their guilt they did inflame it, and by thinking to make Atonement for their Sins they did in truth add to the number and heinousness of them.

And let us likewise learn from this admirable Pattern, to pity those that are in misery, as *Christ* also hath pitied us; and to *save them that are ready to perish*, for His sake who *came to seek and to save us that were lost.*

Let us, upon all occasions, be ready to open our bowels of Compassion towards the Poor; in a thankful imitation of his Grace and Goodness who

for our sakes chose to be a Beggar, that we for his sake might not despise the Poor, but might have a tender regard and compassion to those whose Condition in this World does so nearly resemble that in which the *Son of God* thought it fittest for him to appear when he was pleased to become *Man*.

In a word, Let us in the whole course, and in all the actions of our lives, *shew forth the Vertues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light*; and *hath raised up a mighty Salvation for us*, that *being delivered from all our* spiritual *Enemies*, from Sin and all the Powers of Darkness, we might *serve him* who hath *saved us*; *walking in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.*

Now, *to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was slain: To God even our Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, the first begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth, Unto him, who hath loved us, and washed from our Sins in his own Blood*: And whilst we were *Enemies* to Him, loved us at such a rate as never any Man did his *Friend*: To *Him*, who became Man, that he might bring us to God; and assumed our frail and mortal Nature, that he might cloath us with Immortality and Life: To *Him*, who was pleased to dwell and live amongst us, that he might teach us how to live: To *Him*, *who died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification, and lives for ever to make Intercession for us*: To *Him*, be Glory and Dominion, Thanksgiving and Praise to Eternal Ages. *Amen.*

# SERMON XLVIII.

## Concerning the

## *Unity of the Divine Nature, and the B. Trinity, &c.*

### 1 Tim. II. 5.

*For there is one God.*

THE Particle *for* leads us to the consideration of the Context and Occasion of these words, which in short is this. The design of this *Epistle* is to direct *Timothy*, to whom St. *Paul* had committed the Government of the Church of *Ephesus*, how he ought to demean himself in that great and weighty Charge. And at the beginning of this *Chapter* he gives direction concerning *Publick Prayers* in the Church; that *Prayers* and *Thanksgiving be made for all Men*, and for all Ranks and Orders of Men; especially for *Kings and all that are in Authority, that under them* Christians *might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

And this he tells us was very suitable to the *Christian* Religion, by which God design'd the Salvation of Mankind; and therefore it must needs be very acceptable to him that we should offer up *Prayers* and *Thanksgivings* to him in behalf of *all Men*; *For this*, saith the *Apostle*, *is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all Men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.*

And then it follows in the next words, *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all:* As if he had said, this universal Charity of *Christians*, in *praying for all Men*, must needs be very acceptable to *Him* to whom we put up our Prayers, *God* the *Father*, who sent his Son for the Salvation of *all Men:* And to *Him* likewise by whom we offer up our Prayers to God, and is among us *Christians* the only *Mediator between God and Men*, in vertue of that Price and Ransom which he paid for the Redemption of all Mankind; I say, for this reason it must needs be very acceptable to Him that we should pray for all Men, because he died for all Men, and now that he is in Heaven at the right hand of God intercedes with him for the Salvation of those for whom he died: *There is One God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all.*

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately, that it is *acceptable to God our Saviour*, that we should put up Prayers to Him *for all Men*, because he desires the Salvation of all Men, and hath sent his *Son* to purchase the Salvation of all Men by the Sacrifice of himself; and in virtue of that Sacrifice to be the only *Mediator* between God and us; I say, though this be the immediate scope and design of these words, yet they are likewise a direction to us, unto whom we ought to address our Prayers, namely, to *God*; and by whose *mediation* and Intercession we ought

ought to put up our Prayers to God the *Father*, namely, by his *Son Jesus Christ*, who is constituted the only *Mediator between God and Men*.

There are several *Propositions* contained in this and the following verse; but I shall at present confine my self to the *first*, namely, That *there is One God*, that is, *but One*, as St. *Paul* elsewhere expresseth it, *There is none other God but One*. And *Moses* lays this as the Foundation of the *Natural* Law,
1 Cor. 8. 4.
Deut. 4. 35. as well as of the *Jewish* Religion, *The Lord he is One God, and there is none besides him*, that is, besides *Jehovah*, whom the People of *Israel* did worship as the only true God. And this the Prophet *Isaiah* perpetually declares in
Isai 44. 6. opposition to the *Polytheism* and variety of Gods among the *Heathen*: *I*
v. 8. *am the first, and am the last, and besides me there is no God*. And again, *Is there any God besides me? there is no God, I know not any*: He, who hath an infinite knowledge and knows all things, knows no other God. And our *B. Saviour* makes this the *Fundamental Article* of all Religion, and the knowledge of it necessary to every Man's Salvation; *This*, says *He, is life eternal, to know thee the only true God*.

The *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is a *Notion* wherein the greatest and the wisest part of Mankind did always agree, and therefore may reasonably be presumed to be either *natural*, or to have sprung from some *Original Tradition* delivered down to us from the *first Parents* of Mankind: I mean, that there is *One Supreme Being*, the *Author* and *Cause* of all things, whom the most ancient of the *Heathen Poets* commonly called *the Father of Gods and Men*. And thus *Aristotle* in his *Metaphysicks* defines God, *the eternal and most excellent*, or *best of all Living Beings*. And this *Notion*, of *One Supreme Being*, agrees very well with that exact Harmony which appears in the Frame and Government of the World, in which we see all things conspiring to one End, and continuing in one uniform Order and Course; which cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other but a constant and uniform Cause; and which to a considering Man does plainly shew, that all things are made and governed by that *One* powerful *Principle*, and great and wise *Mind* which we call *God*.

But although the generality of Mankind had a *Notion* of *One Supreme God*, yet the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen* plainly shews, that this *Notion*, in process of time, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehension of a *Plurality* of *Gods*; though in reason it is evident enough, that there can be no more Gods than *One*; and that One, who is of infinite Perfection, is as sufficient to all purposes whatsoever, as ten thousand Deities, if they were possible, could possibly be; as I shall shew in the following Discourse.

Now this multitude of *Deities*; which the fond Superstition and vain Imagination of Men had formed to themselves, were by the *Wiser* sort, who being forced to comply with the Follies of the People endeavoured to make the best of them, supposed to be either *Parts* of the *Universe* which the *Egyptians*, as *Plutarch* tells us, thought to be the same with *God*; but then the more considerable Parts of the *Universe* they parcelled out into several *Deities*; and as the *Ocean* hath several *Names*, according to the several *Coasts* and *Countries* by which it passeth; so they gave several *Names* to this *One Deity* according to the several Parts of the World which several Nations made the Objects of their Worship.

Or else, they adored the several Perfections and Powers of the *One Supreme God* under several *Names* and *Titles*, with regard to the various *Blessings* and *Benefits* which they thought they received from *Him*.

Thus the *Indian* Philosophers, the *Brachmans*, are said to have worshipped the *Sun* as the *Supreme Deity*; and he certainly is the most *Worshipful*

of all ſenſible Beings, and bids faireſt for a *Deity*; eſpecially if he was, as they ſuppoſed, animated by a *Spirit* endued with Knowledge and Underſtanding. And if a Man who had been bred in a dark Cave, ſhould all on the ſudden be brought out at Noon-day to behold this viſible World; after he had viewed and conſider'd it a while, he would in all probability pitch upon the *Sun* as the moſt likely, of all the things he had ſeen, to be a *Deity*. For if ſuch a Man had any Notion of *a God*, and were to chuſe one upon ſight, he would without diſpute fix upon the *Sun*, and fall down before Him and worſhip Him.

And *Macrobius* manageth this as his main *Plea* for the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen*; that under all the ſeveral *Names* of their *Gods* they Worſhipped the *Sun*: And this diverſity of *Names* was but a more diſtinct conception and acknowledgment of the many Bleſſings and Advantages which Mankind receiv'd from Him, and a more particular and Expreſs Adoration of the ſeveral *Powers* and *Perfections* which were in *Him*. And this was the very beſt defence, and all the tolerable ſenſe which the *Wiſeſt* among the *Heathen* could make of the *multitude* of their *Deities*.

And yet whilſt they generally owned *One Supreme Being* that was the *Principle* and *Original* of all things, they worſhipped ſeveral *ſubordinate Deities* as really diſtinct from one another. Some of theſe they fancied to be *ſuperiour* to the reſt and to have their reſidence in *Heaven*; by which *Marſilius Ficinus* ſuppoſes *Plato* to mean no more but the *Chief* of the *Angels*: Theſe were called θεοὶ, *Dii Superi* and *Dii Cœleſtes*, *ſuperior* and *heavenly Gods*: The *Scripture* terms them *the Hoſt of Heaven*, meaning the *Sun*, *Moon*, and *Stars*, which they ſuppoſed to be animated, or at leaſt, to be inhabited by *Angels*, or glorious Spirits; whom they called *Gods*.

Other of their *Deities* were accounted much *inferior* to theſe, being ſuppoſed to be the *Souls* of their deceaſed *Heroes*; who for their great and worthy Deeds, when they lived upon Earth, were ſuppoſed after Death to be tranſlated into the number of their *Gods*. And theſe were called *Semidei* and *Deaſtri*, that is, *half Gods* and *a ſort of Gods*. And as the other were *Celeſtial*, ſo theſe were Δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι, a kind of *Terreſtrial* Spirits that were *Preſidents* and *Procurators* of Human Affairs here below; that is, a middle ſort of *Divine Powers* that were *Mediators* and *Agents* between *God* and *Men*, and did carry the Prayers and Supplications of Men to God, and bring down the Commands and Bleſſings of God to Men.

But in the midſt of all this *Crowd* and *Confuſion* of *Deities*, and the various *Superſtitions* about them, the Wiſer *Heathen*, as *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, *Tully*, *Plutarch*, and others preſerved a true Notion of *One Supreme God*, whom they defined an *infinite Spirit*, *pure from all Matter and free from all Imperfection*: And all the variety of their *Worſhip* was, as they pretended in excuſe of it, but a more particular owning of the various repreſentations of the *Divine* Power and Excellencies which manifeſted themſelves in the World, and of the ſeveral communications of Bleſſings and Favours by *them* imparted to *Men*: and *Tertullian* obſerves, that even when *Idolatry* had very much obſcur'd the Glory of the *Sovereign Deity*, yet the greater part of Mankind did ſtill in their common *Forms* of *Speech* appropriate the Name of *God* in a more eſpecial and peculiar manner to *One*, ſaying, *If God grant*, *If God pleaſe*, and the like.

*Adverſus Marcionem*, l. 1. c. 10.

So that there is ſufficient ground to believe, that the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, or the Notion of *One Supreme God*, Creator and Governour of the World, was the Primitive and general belief of Mankind: And that *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* were a corruption and degeneracy from the *Original*

*Notion* which Mankind had concerning *God*; as the *Scripture History* doth declare and testifie.

And this Account which I have given of the *Heathen Idolatry* doth by no means excuse it. For whatever may be said by way of extenuation in behalf of some few of the wiser and more devout among them, the generality were grosly guilty both of believing *more Gods*, and of worshipping *false Gods*.

And this must needs be a very great Crime, since the *Scripture* every where declares God to be particularly *jealous* in this Case, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven Images*. Nay, we may not so much as make use of sensible Images to put us in mind of God, lest devout Ignorance, seeing the Worship which wise Men paid towards an *Idol*, should be drawn to terminate their Worship there, as being the very *Deity* it self; which was certainly the Case of the greatest part of the *Heathen* World.

And surely those *Christians* are in no less danger of *Idolatry*, who pay a Veneration to *Images* by *kneeling down* and praying before them; and in this they are much more inexcusable, because they offend against a much clearer Light; and yet when they go about to justifie this Practice are able to bring no other nor better *Pleas* for themselves than the *Heathen* did for their worshipping of *Images*, and for praying to their *inferior Deities*, whom they looked upon as *Mediators* between the *Gods* in Heaven and *Men* upon Earth.

There is but one *Objection*, that I know of, against the general Consent of Mankind concerning the *Unity of God*; and it is this, That there was an ancient Doctrine of some of the most ancient Nations, that there were *two First Causes* or *Principles* of all things; the *one* the cause of all *Good*, and the *other* of all the *Evil* that is in the World: The reason whereof seems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of so contrary nature, as *Good* and *Evil*, could proceed from *one* and the same *Cause*.

And these two *Principles* in several Nations were called by several Names: *Plutarch* says, that among the *Greeks* the *Good Principle* was called *God*, and the *Evil Principle* Δαίμων, or the *Devil*. In conformity to which ancient *Tradition* the *Manichees*, a *Sect* which called themselves *Christians*, did advance *two Principles*, the *one* infinitely *Good*, which they supposed to be the *Original Cause* of all the *good* which is in the World; the *other* infinitely *Evil*, to which they ascribed all the *evils* that are in the World.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient *Tradition* concerning that *old Serpent* the *Devil*, the Head of the *fallen Angels*, who by tempting our *First Parents* to transgress a positive and express Law of God brought *Sin* first into the World and all the *Evils* consequent upon it; of which the *Scripture* gives us a most express and particular account.

And as to the *Notion* of a *Being infinitely Evil* into which this *Tradition* was corrupted, after *Idolatry* had prevail'd in the World, besides that it is a Contradiction, it would likewise be to no purpose to assert *two* opposite *Principles* of *infinite*, that is, of *equal* Force and Power, for *two Infinites* must of necessity be equal to one another; because nothing can be more or greater than Infinite, and therefore if *two* infinite Beings were possible they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwise.

Now that the Notion of a *Principle infinitely Evil* is a Contradiction will be very plain, if we consider that what is *infinitely Evil* must in strict Reasoning, and by necessary Consequence, be infinitely imperfect; and therefore infinitely weak, and for that reason, though never so malicious and mischievous, yet being infinitely weak and foolish, could never be in a capacity either to contrive mischief or to execute it.

But

But if it should be admitted, that a Being infinitely mischievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no evil; because the opposite *Principle* of *infinite Goodness*, being also infinitely Wise and Powerful, they would tye up one another's hands. So that upon this supposition the *Notion of a Deity* must signifie just nothing, because by vertue of the eternal opposition and equal conflict of these *two Principles* they would keep one another at a perpetual *Baye*; and being just an equal Match to one another, the *one* having as much mind and power to do *good* as the *other* to do *evil*, instead of being *two Deities* they would be but *two Idols*, able to do neither *good* nor *evil*.

And having, I hope, now sufficiently clear'd this *Objection*, I shall proceed to shew how agreeable this *Principle*, that *there is but one God*, is to the common Reason of Mankind, and to the clearest and most essential Notions which we have of God: And this will appear these *two* ways.

*First*, By considering the most essential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature.

*Secondly*, From the repugnancy and impossibility, the great absurdity and inconvenience of supposing more Gods than One.

*First*, By considering the most essential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature. *Absolute Perfection* which we ascribe to God, as the most essential Notion which Mankind hath always had concerning Him, does necessarily suppose *Unity*; because this is essential to the Notion of a Being that is *absolutely Perfect*, that all Perfection meets and is united in such a Being: But to imagine more Gods, and some Perfections to be in one and some in another, does destroy the most *essential* Notion which Men have of God, namely, that *He* is a *Being absolutely Perfect*, that is, as perfect as is possible: Now to suppose some Perfections in one God which are not in another, is to suppose some possible Perfection to be wanting in God, which is a Contradiction to the most natural and the most easie Notion which all Men have of God, that he is a Being in whom all Perfections do meet and are united: But if we suppose more Gods, each of which hath all Perfections united in Him, then all but one would be superfluous and needless; and therefore by just and necessary consequence not only *may*, but of necessity *must* be supposed not to be; since *necessary existence* is *essential* to the *Deity*; and therefore if *but one God* be necessary, there can be no more.

*Secondly*, From the *repugnancy* and *impossibility*, the great *absurdity* and *inconvenience* of the contrary. For suppose there were more *Gods*, *two* for example; and if there may be *two* there may be a *million*, for we can stop no where: I say, suppose *two Gods*; either these *two* would be in all Perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: If equal and alike in all things, then, as I said before, one of them would be needless and superfluous, and if *one* why not as well the *other*? they being supposed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no necessity at all of the being of a God; and yet it is granted on all hands, that *necessary existence* is essential to the Notion of a *God*: But if they be unequal, that is, *one* of them inferior to and less perfect than the *other*, that which is inferior and less perfect could not be God, because he would not have all perfection. So that which way soever we turn the thing and look upon it, the Notion of more Gods than One is by its own repugnancy and self-contradiction destructive of it self.

Before I come to apply this *Doctrine* of the *Unity of God*, I must not pass by a very considerable *Difficulty*, which will most certainly arise in every

Man's Mind, without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the *Doctrine* of the *B. Trinity*, or of *three* real *Differences* or *distinct Persons* in *One* and the same *Divine Nature*.

And though this be not a *Difficulty* peculiar only to the *Christian* Religion, as by the generality of those who urge this *Objection* against *Christians* hath been inconsiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before *Christianity* appeared in the World, there was a very ancient *Tradition*, both among *Jews* and *Heathen*, concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Distinctions* in the Divine Nature, very nearly resembling the *Christian* Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as I shall have occasion more fully to shew by and by: Yet it cannot be deny'd, but that this *Difficulty* doth in a more especial manner affect the *Christian* Religion; the generality of *Christians*, who do most firmly believe the *Trinity*, believing likewise at the same time, more stedfastly if it be possible,
1 Cor. 8.6. *that there is but one God*. *To us*, saith St. *Paul*, that is, *to us Christians*, *there is but one God*. But how can this possibly consist with the common *Doctrine* of *Christians* concerning the *Trinity*, God the *Father*, *Son*, *and H. Ghost*, to each of whom they Attribute, as they verily believe the *Scripture* does, the most incommunicable *Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Divine Nature?* And what is this less in effect than to say, *That there are three Gods?*

For the clearing of this *Difficulty* I shall, with all the brevity I can, offer these following *Considerations*; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced Judgment, will be sufficient to remove it, or at least to break the main force and strength of it.

I. I. I desire it may be well consider'd, that there is a wide difference between the nice *Speculations* of the *Schools*, beyond what is revealed in *Scripture*, concerning the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, and what the *Scripture only* teaches and asserts concerning this *Mystery*. For it is not to be deny'd but that the *Schoolmen*, who abounded in wit and leisure, though very few among them had either exact skill in the *H. Scriptures*, or in *Ecclesiastical Antiquity* and the *Writings* of the *ancient Fathers of* the *Christian* Church: I say, it cannot be deny'd but that these *Speculative* and very acute Men, who wrought a great part of their *Divinity* out of their own Brains, as *Spiders* do *Cobwebs* out of their own bowels, have started a thousand *subtleties* about this *Mystery*, such as no *Christian* is bound to trouble his head withal; much less is it necessary for him to understand those *niceties* which we may reasonably presume that they who talk of them did themselves never throughly understand; and least of all is it necessary to believe them. The modesty of *Christians* is contented in *Divine Mysteries* to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curiosity to be *wise above that which is written*. It is enough to believe what God says concerning these matters; and if any Man will venture to say more, every other Man surely is at his liberty to believe as he sees reason.

II. II. I desire it may in the next place be consider'd, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, even as it is asserted in *Scripture*, is acknowledged by us to be still a great *Mystery*, and so imperfectly revealed as to be in a great measure incomprehensible by Human Reason. And therefore though some learned and judicious Men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great *Mystery* by the strength of *Reason*, yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of such an Attempt, and mine own insufficiency for it.

All

All that I ever designed upon this Argument was to make out the credibility of the thing from the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the *Scripture* hath given us; lest by endeavouring to lay the *Difficulties* which are already started about it new ones should be raised, and such as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than those which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in some measure done in one of the former *Discourses*. Nor indeed do I see that it is any ways necessary to do more; it being sufficient that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter, and that we do firmly believe what he says concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath said about it. *Ser.* XLIV.

For in this and the like Cases I take an *Implicit Faith* to be very commendable, that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, though we do not fully understand his meaning in such a Revelation. And thus every Man who believes the *H. Scriptures* to be a truly *Divine* Revelation does *implicitly* believe a great part of the *Prophetical* Books of *Scripture* and several obscure expressions in those Books, though he do not particularly understand the meaning of all the Predictions and Expressions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good *Christians* who do not believe and comprehend the Mysteries of Faith nicely enough to approve themselves to a *Scholastical* and Magisterial *Judge* of *Controversies*, who yet if they do heartily embrace the *Doctrines* which are clearly revealed in *Scripture* and live up to the plain *Precepts* of the *Christian* Religion, will I doubt, not be very well approved by the great and Just, and by the *Infallibly* Infallible Judge of the World.

III. Let it be further considered, That though neither the word *Trinity*, nor perhaps *Person*, in the sense in which it is used by *Divines* when they treat of this *Mystery*, be any where to be met with in *Scripture*; yet it cannot be deny'd but that *Three* are there spoken of by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, in whose Name every *Christian* is baptiz'd, and to each of whom the highest *Titles* and *Properties* of *God* are in *Scripture* attributed: And these three are spoken of with as much distinction from one another as we use to speak of *three* several Persons. III.

So that though the word *Trinity* be not found in *Scripture*, yet these *Three* are there expresly and frequently mention'd; and a *Trinity* is nothing but *three* of any thing. And so likewise though the word *Person* be not there expresly applied to *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to express the distinction of these *Three*. For which reason I could never yet see any just cause to quarrel at this *term*. For since the *H. Spirit* of God in *Scripture* hath thought fit in speaking of these *Three* to distinguish them from one another, as we use in common speech to distinguish *three* several *Persons*, I cannot see any reason why, in the explication of this *Mystery* which purely depends upon *Divine Revelation*, we should not speak of it in the same manner as the *Scripture* doth: And though the word *Person* is now become a *Term of Art*, I see no cause why we should decline it, so long as we mean by it neither more nor less than what the *Scripture* says in other Words.

IV. It deserves further to be considered, That there hath been a very ancient *Tradition* concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Distinctions* in the *Divine Nature*; and these, as I said before, very nearly resembling the *Christian* Doctrine of the *Trinity*. IV

Whence

Whence this *Tradition* had its original is not easie upon good and certain grounds to say; but certain it is that the *Jews* anciently had this *Notion:* And that they did distinguish the *Word of God*, and the *H. Spirit of God*, from *Him* who was *absolutely* called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the *First Principle* of all things; as is plain from *Philo Judæus*, and *Moses Nach-*
l. 5. *manides*, and others cited by the Learned *Grotius* in his incomparable Book of the *Truth of the Christian Religion.*

And among the *Heathen*, *Plato*, who probably enough might have this *Notion* from the *Jews*, did make *three Distinctions* in the *Deity* by the Names of *Essential Goodness*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit.*

So that whatever Objections this matter may be liable to it, is not so peculiar a *Doctrine* of the *Christian* Religion as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearness and certainty: And consequently, neither the *Jews* nor *Plato* have any reason to object it to us *Christians*; especially since *they* pretend no other ground for it but either their own *Reason*, or an *ancient Tradition* from their *Fathers:* whereas we *Christians* do appeal to express *Divine Revelation* for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it singly upon that account.

V. V. It is besides very considerable, That the *Scriptures* do deliver this Doctrine of the *Trinity* without any manner of doubt or question concerning the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature:* And not only so, but do most stedfastly and constantly assert that there is but *One God:* And in those very *Texts*, in which these *three Differences* are mentioned, the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is expresly asserted; as where St. *John* makes mention of the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, the *Unity* of these *Three* is likewise affirmed, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these Three are One.*

VI. VI. It is yet further considerable, That from this *Mystery*, as delivered in *Scripture*, a Plurality of Gods cannot be inferr'd without making the *Scripture* grosly to contradict it self; which I charitably suppose the *Socinians* would be as loath to admit as we our selves are. And if either *Councils*, or *Fathers*, or *Schoolmen*, have so explain'd this *Mystery* as to give any just ground, or so much as a plausible colour for such an Inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the *H. Scriptures*; but rather, as the *Apostle* says in another Case, *Let God be true, and every Man a Liar.*

VII. VII*thly* and *Lastly*, I desire it may be consider'd, That it is not repugnant to Reason to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our Reason; provided that we have sufficient ground and reason for the belief of them: Especially if they be concerning *God*, who is in his Nature *Incomprehensible*; and we be well assured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us that these *Differences* in the *Deity* are *incomprehensible* by our finite understandings; because the *Divine Nature* it self is so, and yet the belief of *that* is the Foundation of all Religion.

There are a great many things in *Nature* which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: As the *Continuity of Matter*, that is, how the parts of it do hang so fast together, that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are sure that it is so, because we see it every day. So likewise how the small *Seeds* of things contain the whole *Form* and *Nature* of the things from which they proceed and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly see this every year.

There

There are many things likewise in our *Selves*, which no Man is able in any measure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: As the *vital union* of *Soul* and *Body:* Who can imagine by what device or means a *Spirit* comes to be so closely united and so firmly link'd to a *material Body*, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offer'd to Nature? The like may be said of the operations of our several *Faculties* of *Sense* and *Imagination*, of *Memory* and *Reason*, and especially of the *Liberty* of our *Wills:* And yet we certainly find all these *Faculties* in our selves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the several Operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of those Operations which we plainly perceive and feel to be in our *Selves*, much less can we expect to comprehend things without us; and least of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, and every thing belonging to Him. For God himself is certainly the greatest *Mystery* of all other, and acknowledged by Mankind to be in his Nature, and in the particular manner of his Existence, incomprehensible by Human Understanding. And the reason of this is very evident, because God is infinite, and our knowledge and understanding is but finite: And yet no sober Man ever thought this a good reason to call the Being of God in question.

The same may be said of God's certain knowledge of Future Contingencies which depend upon the uncertain Wills of Free Agents: It being utterly inconceivable how any Understanding, how large and perfect soever, can certainly know beforehand that which depends upon the *free Will* of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain Cause.

And yet the *Scripture* doth not only attribute this Foreknowledge to God, but gives us also plain Instances of God's foretelling such things, many Ages before it happen'd, as could not come to pass but by the Sins of Men, in which we are sure that God can have no hand; though nothing can happen with out his permission: Such was that most memorable Event of the Death of *Christ*, who, as the *Scripture* tells us, was *by wicked hands crucified and slain*; and yet even *this* is said to have happened *according to the determinate foreknowledge of God*, and was punctually foretold by Him some hundreds of years before. Nay, the *Scripture* doth not only ascribe this power and perfection to the *Divine* knowledge, but *natural Reason* hath been forced to acknowledge it, as we may see in some of the wisest of the *Philosophers*. And yet it would puzzle the greatest *Philosopher* that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any Knowledge whatsoever can certainly and infallibly foresee an Event through uncertain and contingent Causes. All the reasonable satisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that *infinite Knowledge* may have ways of knowing things which our *finite Understandings* can by no means comprehend how they can possibly be known.

Again, there is hardly any thing more inconceivable than how a thing should be of it self, and without any Cause of its Being; and yet our Reason compels us to acknowledge this; Because we certainly see that something is, which must either have been of it self and without a Cause, or else something that we do not see must have been of it self and have made all other things: And by this reasoning we are forced to acknowledge a *Deity*, the Mind of Man being able to find no rest but in the acknowledgment of one *eternal* and *Wise Mind* as the *Principle* and *First Cause* of all other things; and this *Principle* is that which Mankind do by general consent call *God*. So that God hath laid a sure foundation of our acknowledgment

ment of his Being in the Reaſon of our own Minds: And though it be one of the hardeſt things in the World to conceive how any thing can be of it ſelf, yet neceſſity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no: And this being once granted, our Reaſon, being tired in trying all other ways, will for its own quiet and eaſe force us at laſt to fall in with the general apprehenſion and belief of Mankind concerning a *Deity*.

To give but one *Inſtance* more; There is the like Difficulty in conceiving *how any thing can be made*, out of nothing; and yet our Reaſon doth oblige us to believe it: Becauſe *Matter*, which is a very *imperfect Being* and merely *paſſive*, muſt either always have been of it ſelf; or elſe, by the infinite Power of a moſt *perfect and active Being*, muſt have been made out of nothing: Which is much more credible, than that any thing ſo *imperfect* as *Matter* is ſhould be of it ſelf: Becauſe that which is of it ſelf cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its *Being* and *Perfection*; for by the ſame reaſon that it neceſſarily is and of it ſelf, it muſt neceſſarily have all perfection, which it is certain *Matter* hath not; and yet *neceſſary Exiſtence* is ſo great a Perfection, that we cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe any thing that hath this Perfection to want any other.

Thus you ſee, by theſe *Inſtances*, that it is not repugnant to Reaſon to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whoſe Exiſtence we are not able to give a particular and diſtinct account. And much leſs is it repugnant to Reaſon to believe thoſe things concerning God which we are very well aſſured he hath declared concerning Himſelf, though theſe things by our Reaſon ſhould be incomprehenſible.

And this is truly the Caſe as to the matter now under debate: We are ſufficiently aſſured that the *Scriptures* are a *Divine Revelation*, and that this *Myſtery* of the *Trinity* is therein declared to us. Now that we cannot comprehend it, is no ſufficient Reaſon not to believe it: For if this were a good Reaſon for not believing it, then no Man ought to believe that there is a God, becauſe his Nature is moſt certainly incomprehenſible. But we are aſſured by many Arguments that there is a God; and the ſame *natural Reaſon* which aſſures us that *He is*, doth likewiſe aſſure us that *He is incomprehenſible*; and therefore our believing Him to be ſo doth by no means overthrow our belief of His Being.

In like manner, we are aſſured by *Divine Revelation* of the truth of this Doctrine of the *Trinity*; and being once aſſured of *that*, our not being able fully to comprehend it is not reaſon enough to ſtagger our belief of it. A Man cannot deny what he ſees, though the neceſſary conſequence of admitting it may be ſomething which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the Frame of this World which he ſees with his Eyes, though from thence it will neceſſarily follow, that either *that* or ſomething elſe muſt be of it ſelf; which yet, as I ſaid before, is a thing which no Man can comprehend how it can be.

And by the ſame Reaſon a Man muſt not deny what God ſays, to be true; though he cannot comprehend many things which God ſays: As particularly concerning this *Myſtery* of the *Trinity*. It ought then to ſatisfie us that there is ſufficient evidence that this Doctrine is delivered in *Scripture*, and that what is there declared concerning it doth not imply a Contradiction. For why ſhould our finite underſtandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite, or to know all the real *Differences* that are conſiſtent with the Unity of an Infinite Being: or to be able fully to explain this *Myſtery* by any ſimilitude or reſemblance taken from *finite Beings*?

But before I leave this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the *Church* of *Rome* are perpetually objecting to us upon this Occasion. And it is this, That by the same reason that we believe the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, we may and must receive that of *Transubstantiation*. God forbid: Because of all the *Doctrines* that ever were in any Religion, this of *Transubstantiation* is certainly the most abominably absurd.

However, this *Objection* plainly shews how fondly and obstinately they are addicted to their own Errors, how misshapen and monstrous soever; insomuch, that rather than the Dictates of their Church, how absurd soever, should be call'd in question, they will question the truth even of *Christianity* it self; and if we will not take in *Transubstantiation*, and admit it to be a *necessary Article* of the *Christian Faith*, they grow so sullen and desperate that they matter not what becomes of all the rest: And rather than not have their Will of us in that which is *controverted*, they will give up that which by their own confession is an *undoubted Article* of the *Christian Faith*, and not controverted on either Side; except only by the *Socinians*, who yet are hearty Enemies to *Transubstantiation*, and have exposed the absurdity of it with great advantage.

But I shall endeavour to return a more particular *Answer* to this *Objection*; and such a one as I hope will satisfie every considerate and unprejudic'd Mind, that after all this confidence and swaggering of theirs there is by no means equal reason either for the *receiving* or for the *rejecting* of these *two Doctrines* of the *Trinity* and *Transubstantiation*.

*First*, There is not equal reason for the *belief* of these *Two Doctrines*. This *Objection*, if it be of any force, must suppose that there is equal evidence and proof from *Scripture* for these *two Doctrines*: But this we utterly deny, and with great reason; because it is no more evident from the words of *Scripture*, that the *Sacramental Bread* is substantially changed into *Christ's natural Body* by virtue of those words, *This is my Body*, than it is, that *Christ* is substantially changed into a *natural Vine* by virtue of those words, *I am the true Vine*; or than that the *Rock* in the Wilderness, of which the *Israelites* drank, was substantially changed into the *Person* of *Christ*, because it is expresly said, *That Rock was Christ*; or than that the *Christian Church* is substantially changed into the *natural Body* of *Christ*, because it is in express terms said of the *Church*, That *it is his Body*.

Joh. 15. 1.

Eph. 1. 23.

But besides this, several of their own most learned *Writers* have freely acknowledged, that *Transubstantiation* can neither be directly proved, nor necessarily concluded from *Scripture*: But this the *Writers* of the *Christian Church* did never acknowledge concerning the *Trinity*, and the *Divinity* of *Christ*; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable Testimonies of *Scripture* for the proof of these *Doctrines*. And then the whole force of the Objection amounts to this, That if I am bound to believe what I am sure God says, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the same reason to believe the greatest Absurdity in the World, though I have no manner of assurance of any *Divine Revelation* concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we understand not *Transubstantiation*, yet we very well understand what they would have, but cannot grant it; because there is not equal reason to believe *two* things for *one* of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

*Secondly*, Neither is there equal reason for the *rejecting* of these two *Doctrines*. This the Objection supposes, which yet cannot be supposed but upon one or both of these two grounds: Either because these two *Doctrines* are equally *incomprehensible*, or because they are equally loaded with *Absurdities* and *Contradictions*.

The *First* is no good ground of *rejecting* any *Doctrine*, merely because it is *incomprehensible:* as I have abundantly shew'd already. But besides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of *Sense*, and *Mysteries* concerning God; and it does by no means follow, that, if a Man do once admit any thing concerning God which he cannot *comprehend*, he hath no reason afterwards to believe what he himself *sees*. This is a most unreasonable and destructive way of arguing, because it strikes at the foundation of all Certainty, and sets every Man at liberty to deny the most plain and evident *Truths* of *Christianity*, if he may not be humour'd in having the absurdest things in the World admitted for true. The next step will be to persuade us, that we may as well deny the Being of *God* because his Nature is *incomprehensible* by our *Reason*, as deny *Transubstantiation* because *it evidently contradicts* our *Senses*.

2*dly*. Nor are these *two Doctrines* loaded with the like *Absurdities* and *Contradictions:* So far from this, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as it is delivered in the *Scriptures*, and hath already been explain'd, hath no Absurdity or Contradiction either involv'd in it, or necessarily consequent upon it: But the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* is big with all imaginable Absurdity and Contradiction. And their own *Schoolmen* have sufficiently expos'd it; especially *Scotus*, and he designed to do so, as any Man that attentively reads him may plainly discover: For in his *Disputation* about it he treats this *Doctrine* with the greatest contempt, as a new Invention of the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* III. To the *Decree* of which *Council* concerning it he seems to pay a formal submission, but really derides it as contrary to the common *Sense* and *Reason* of Mankind, and not at all supported by *Scripture*; as any one may easily discern that will carefully consider his manner of handling it and the result of his whole *Disputation* about it.

And now suppose there were some appearance of Absurdity and Contradiction in the Doctrine of the *Trinity* as it is delivered in *Scripture*, must we therefore believe a Doctrine which is not at all reveal'd in *Scripture*, and which hath certainly in it all the *absurdities* in the World, and all the *Contradictions* to *Sense* and *Reason*; and which once admitted, doth at once destroy all Certainty? Yes, say they, why not? since we of the *Church* of *Rome* are satisfy'd that this *Doctrine* is reveal'd in *Scripture*; or, if it be not, is defin'd by the Church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between *us* and *them*, but even among themselves, at least till the *Council* of *Trent*? And this upon such unreasonable terms, that we must either yield this *Point* to them, or else renounce a *Doctrine* agreed on both Sides to be reveal'd in *Scripture*.

To shew the unreasonableness of this proceeding, Let us suppose a *Priest* of the Church of *Rome* pressing *a Jew* or *Turk* to the belief of *Transubstantiation*, and because one kindness deserves another, the *Jew* or *Turk* should demand of him the belief of all the *Fables* in the *Talmud*, or in the *Alchoran*; since none of these, nor indeed all of them together, are near so absurd as *Transubstantiation:* Would not this be much more reasonable and equal than what they demand of us? Since no Absurdity, how monstrous and big soever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an Understanding in which a Breach hath been already made wide enough to admit *Transubstantiation*. The Priests of *Baal* did not half so much deserve to be expos'd by the *Prophet* for their Superstition and Folly, as the Priests of the Church of *Rome* do for this senseless and stupid *Doctrine* of theirs with a *hard Name*. I shall only add this one thing more, That if this Doctrine

were

were possible to be true, and clearly prov'd to be so; yet it would be evidently useless and to no purpose. For it pretends to change the substance of one thing into the substance of another thing that is already and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpose? Not to make the *Body* of Christ, for that was already in Being; and the Substance of the *Bread*, is lost, nothing of it remaineth but *Accidents*, which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing when the Substance is destroy'd and gone.

All that now remains, is to make some *practical Inferences* from this *Doctrine* of the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*. And they shall be the same which God himself makes by *Moses*, which *Text* is also cited by our *Saviour*, *Hear*, Deut 6. 4.
*O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord* Mark. 12. 29,30,31.
*thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* So that according to our *Saviour* the whole Duty of Man, the *love of God*, and *of our Neighbour* is founded in the *Unity* of the Divine *Nature*.

I. The *love of God*; *The Lord thy God is one Lord*, therefore *thou shalt love Him with all thy heart*, &c. *this is the first and great Commandment*: And it comprehends in it all the *Duties* of the *first Table* as naturally flowing from it. As that we should *serve him only*, and pay no *Religious Worship* to any but to *Him*. For to pay *Religious Worship* to any thing is to make it a *God*, and to acknowledge it for such: And therefore *God* being but *One*, we can give *Religious Worship* to none but to *Him* only. And among all the parts of *Religious Worship* none is more peculiarly appropriated to the *Deity* than *solemn Invocation* and *Prayer*. For he to whom Men address their Requests, at all times, and in all places, must be supposed to be always every-where present, to understand all our desires and wants, and to be able to supply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likewise from the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* may be inferr'd, that we should not worship God by any *sensible Image* or *Representation:* Because *God* being a *singular Being* there is nothing like *Him*, or that can without injuring and debasing his most *spiritual* and *perfect* and *immense Being* be compared to *Him:* As *He* himself speaks in the *Prophet*, *To whom will ye* Isa. 46. 5.
*liken me, saith the Lord, and make me equal?* And therefore with no *Distinction* whatsoever can it be lawful to give *Religious Worship*, or any part of it, to any but *God:* We can *pray* to none but to *Him*, because *He only* is every-where present, and *only knows the Hearts of all the children of Men*; 1 Kings 8. 39.
which *Solomon* gives as the reason why we should address our Supplications to *God* only, *who dwelleth in the Heavens.*

So that the Reason of these *two Precepts* is founded in the *Unity* and *Singularity* of the *Divine Nature*, and unless there be more *Gods* than *One*, we must *Worship Him only*, and *pray* to none but *Him:* Because we can give *Invocation* to none but to *Him only* whom we believe to be *God*; as St. *Paul* Rom. 10. 14.
reasons, *How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?*

II. The *love* likewise of our *Neighbour* is founded in the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, and may be inferr'd from it: *Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is One Lord, therefore thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And the *Apostle* gives this reason why *Christians* should be at unity among themselves; *There is One God and Father of all*, and therefore we should *keep the unity* Eph. 4. 6.
*of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*; that is, live in mutual love and peace.

The *Prophet* likewise assigns this reason why all Mankind should be upon Mal. 2.10. good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, *Have we not all One Father? hath not one God created us? Why do we then deal treacherously every man against his brother?*

And therefore when we see such hatred and enmity among *Men*, such divisions and animosities among *Christians*, we may not only ask St. *Paul*'s question, *Is Christ divided?* that we cannot agree about serving him; either all to serve him in one way, or to bear with one another in our differences: I say, we may not only ask St. *Paul*'s question, *Is Christ divided?* but may ask further, *Is God divided?* Is there not *One* God, and are we not all his Off-spring? Are we not all the Sons of *Adam, who was the Son of God?* So that if we trace our selves to our *Original*, we shall find a great nearness and equality among Men: And this equality that we are all God's *Creatures* and *Image*, and that the *One only God* is the *Father of us all*, is a more real ground of mutual *love*, and *peace*, and *equity* in our dealings one with another, than any of those petty differences and distinctions of *strong* and *weak*, of *rich* and *poor*, of *wise* and *foolish*, of *base* and *honourable*, can be to en courage Men to any thing of *Insolence*, *Injustice*, and *inequality of dealing* one towards another. Because *that* wherein we all agree, that we are the *Creatures* and *Children of God*, and have all one common *Father*, is essential and constant; but those things wherein we differ are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may suffice to have been spoken concerning the *first Proposition* in the *Text*, *There is one God:* To *Him*, *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

OF

# OF
# STEDFASTNESS
# IN
# RELIGION.

# THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

BEING, *I hope, for the remainder of my Life, releaſed from that irkſome and unpleaſant work of* Controverſie *and* Wrangling *about Religion, I ſhall now turn my Thoughts to ſomething more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of True Religion, to the happineſs of Human Society, and the Reformation of the World.*

*I have no intention to reflect upon any that ſtand up in defence of the* Truth, *and contend earneſtly for it, endeavouring* in the ſpirit of meekneſs *to reclaim thoſe that are in* Error. *For I doubt not but a very good Man may upon ſeveral occaſions be almoſt unavoidably engaged in* Controverſies *of Religion; and if he have a Head clear and cool enough, ſo as to be Maſter of his own* Notions *and* Temper *in that hot kind of Service, he may therein do conſiderable advantage to the* Truth: *Though a Man that hath once* drawn Blood in Controverſie, *as Mr.* Mede *expreſſeth it, is ſeldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.*

*For this reaſon a good Man ſhould not be very willing,* when his Lord comes, *to* be found ſo doing, *and as it were* beating his fellow-ſervants: *And all* Controverſie, *as it is uſually managed, is little better. A good Man would be loth to be taken out of the World reeking hot from a ſharp Contention with a perverſe Adverſary; and not a little out of countenance, to find himſelf in this temper tranſlated into the calm and peaceable* Regions *of the* Bleſſed, *where nothing but perfect* charity *and* good-will *reign for ever.*

*I know not whether St.* Paul, *who had been* taken up into the third Heavens, *did by that Queſtion of his,* Where is the Diſputer of THIS WORLD? *intend to inſinuate, that this* wrangling *work hath place only in* this World, *and upon this* Earth where only *there is a* Duſt *to be raiſed; but will have no place in the* Other. *But whether St.* Paul *intended this or not, the thing it ſelf I think is true, that in the* other

World

World *all things will be clear, and past* dispute. *To be sure, among the* Blessed; *and probably also among the* Miserable, *unless fierce and furious Contentions, with great* Heat *without* Light, *about things of no moment and concernment to them, should be design'd for a part of their* Torment.

*As to the following* Sermons, *I am sensible that the* Style *of them is more loose and full of words, than is agreeable to just and exact* Discourses: *But so I think the* Style *of* Popular Sermons *ought to be. And therefore I have not been very careful to mend this matter; chusing rather that they should appear in that native simplicity in which, so many years ago, they were first fram'd, than dress'd up with too much Care and Art. As they are, I hope, the candid and ingenuous Readers will take them in good part.*

*And I do heartily wish, that all that are concern'd in the respective* Duties, *treated on in the following* Sermons, *would be persuaded so to lay them to heart as to put them effectually in practice: That how much soever the Reformation of this corrupt and degenerate Age in which we live is almost utterly to be despair'd of, we may yet have a more comfortable prospect of future Times, by seeing the foundation of a better World begun to be laid in the careful and conscientious discharge of the Duties here mention'd: That by this means* the Generations to come may know God, and the Children yet unborn may fear the Lord.

*I have great reason to be sensible how fast the infirmities of Age are coming upon me, and therefore* must work the Works of Him, *whose Providence hath placed me in the* Station *wherein I am,* whilst it is Day, because the Night cometh when no man can work.

*I knew very well, before I enter'd upon this great and weighty* Charge, *my own manifold defects, and how unequal my best abilities were for the due discharge of it; but I did not feel this so sensibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore that I might make some small amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place the broken hours I had to spare from almost perpetual business of one kind or other, than in preparing something for the Publick that might be of use to recover the decayed Piety and Vertue of the present Age; in which iniquity doth so much abound, and the Love of God and Religion is grown so cold.*

*To this end I have chosen to publish these plain* Sermons *and to recommend them to the serious perusal and faithful practice both of the* Pastors *and* People *committed to my Charge; earnestly beseeching Almighty God, that by his Blessing they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are sincerely design'd.*

SER-

# SERMON XLIX.

## Concerning

## *Resolution and Stedfastness in Religion.*

Preached at

St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *June* the 3*d.* 1684.

## Josh. XXIV. 15.

--*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

AFTER *Joshua* had brought the People of *Israel* into the promised Land and setled them in the quiet Possession of it, his great desire was to establish them in the true Religion, namely, in the Worship of the *One true God*, who had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*, and given them the Possession of that good Land, the Land of *Canaan*.

And now finding himself weak and declining, being an hundred and ten Years old, and fearing lest after his death the People should fall off from the true Religion to the Worship of Idols, he like a wise and good Governour considers with himself what course he had best to take to keep them firm and stedfast in their *Religion*, and to prevent their defection to the *Idolatry*, of the *Nations round about them.*

And to this end he calls a general Assembly of *all Israel*, that is, chap. 23. v. 1.
of the *Elders*, and *Heads*, and *Judges*, and *Officers* of the several *Tribes*; and in a very wise and eloquent *Speech* represents to them in what a miraculous manner God had *driven out the Nations before them*, *much greater and stronger Nations than they*, and had given them their Land to possess it. And, in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promised to them.

And therefore they ought *to take great heed to themselves, to love God, and to serve Him*; and if they did not, he tells them that it should *come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you which the Lord your God promised you, so shall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good Land which the Lord your God hath given you.* chap. 23. 15.

After this, he calls them together a *second* time, and gives them a brief historical Account and deduction of the great Mercies of God to them and their Fathers, from the days of *Abraham*, whom he had called out from among his Idolatrous Kindred and Countrymen, unto that Day.

From the consideration of all which, he earnestly exhorts them to renew their Covenant with God; and for his particular satisfaction, before he left the World, solemnly to promise that they would for ever serve God and forsake the service of Idols: *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sin-*

*cerity and in truth: And put away the Gods which your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord.*

And then in the *Text*, by a very elegant *Scheme* of Speech he does, as it were, once more set them at liberty; and, as if they had never engaged themselves to God by Covenant before, he leaves them to their free choice; *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve; whether the Gods whom your Fathers served on the other side of the Flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whose Land ye dwell.*

Not that they were at liberty whether they would serve the true God, or not; but to insinuate to them that Religion ought to be their free choice: And likewise, that the true Religion hath those real advantages on its Side, that it may safely be referr'd to any considerate Man's choice: *If it seem evil unto you*; as if he had said, If after all the demonstrations which God hath given of his Miraculous Presence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you by bringing you out of the *Land of Egypt*, and the *House of Bondage* by so outstretched an Arm; and by driving out the Nations before you, and giving you their Land to possess: If after all this, you can think it fit to quit the service of *this God*, and to worship the *Idols* of the Nations whom you have subdued, those vanquished and baffled Deities: If you can think it reasonable so to do, but surely you cannot; then take your choice: *If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom ye will serve.*

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own Resolution, which he hopes will also be theirs; and as he had heretofore been their *Captain*, so now he offers himself to be their *Example*: But whether they will follow him or not, he for his part is fix'd and immovable in this Resolution; *But as for ME and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

In effect he tells them; I have proposed the best Religion to your choice, and I cannot but think, nay I cannot but hope, that you will all stedfastly adhere to it. It is so reasonable and wise, so much your Interest and your Happiness to do it. But if you should do otherwise, if you should be so weak as not to discern the Truth, so wilful and so wicked as not to embrace it: Though you should all make another choice, and run away from the true God to the worship of Idols; I for my part am stedfastly resolved what to do: In a case so manifest, in a matter so reasonably, no Number, no Example shall prevail with me to the contrary; I will, if need be, stand alone in that which is so evidently and unquestionably Right: And though this whole Nation should revolt all at once from the Worship of the true God, and join with the rest of the World in a false Religion and in the Worship of Idols; and mine were the only Family left in all *Israel*, nay in the whole World, that continued to worship the God of *Israel*, I would still be of the same mind; I would still persist in this Resolution, and act according to it; *As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*

A Resolution truly worthy of so great a Prince and so good a Man: In which he is a double Pattern to us.

*First*, Of the brave Resolution of a *good Man*, namely, That if there were occasion, and things were brought to that Extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion: *As for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

*Secondly*, Of the pious Care of a *good Father and Master of a Family*, to train up those under his Charge in the true Religion and Worship of God; *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.*

I shall

I shall at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the *First* of these, namely,

I. Of the brave Resolution of a *good Man*, that if there were occasion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of God's true Religion: *Chuse you this day*, says *Joshua*, *whom ye will serve; but as for ME, I will serve the Lord.* *Joshua* here puts the Case at the utmost extremity, That not only the great Nations of the World, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and all the lesser Nations round about them, and in whose Land they dwelt, were all long since revolted to *Idolatry*, and pretended great Antiquity and long Prescription for the Worship of their false Gods. But he supposeth yet further, That the only true and visible Church of God then known in the World, the People of *Israel*, should likewise generally revolt and forsake the Worship of the *true God*, and cleave to the Service of *Idols*: Yet in this Case, if we could suppose it to happen, he declares his firm and stedfast Resolution to adhere to the Worship of the true God: And though all others should fall off from it, that He would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion: *But as for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

In the handling of this Argument I shall do these *two* things.

*First*, I shall consider the *matter* of this Resolution, and the due *bounds* and *limits* of it.

*Secondly*, I shall endeavour to vindicate the *reasonableness* of this Resolution from the *Objections* to which this singular and peremptory kind of Resolution may seem liable.

*First*, I shall consider the *matter* of this Resolution, and the due *bounds* and *limits* of it.

1. The *matter* of this Resolution. *Joshua* here resolves, that if need were, and things were brought to that pass, he would stand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the Profession and Practice of the true Religion. And this is not a mere Supposition of an impossible Case, which can never happen: For it may, and hath really and in fact happen'd in several Ages and Places of the World.

There hath been a general Apostacy of some great part of God's Church from the Belief and Profession of the true Religion to *Idolatry*, and to *damnable Errors and Heresies*: And some good Men have, upon the matter, stood alone in the open Profession of the true Religion, in the midst of this general Defection from it.

*Elijah* in that general Revolt of the People of *Israel*, when they had *forsaken the Covenant of the Lord, and broken down his Altars, and slain his Prophets*, and *he only*, as he thought, *was left* to stand *alone*: I say, in this Case when, as he verily believ'd, he had no body to stand by him, *he was very* 1 King. 19. *zealous for the Lord God of Hosts*, and with an undaunted courage stood up 18. for the Worship of the true God, and reproved *Ahab* to his face for his defection to the Worship of Idols.

And those *three* brave *Youths*, in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, did in the like chap. 3. resolute and undaunted manner refuse to obey the Command of the great King *Nebuchadnezzar*, *to worship the Image which he had set up*; when all others Submitted and paid Honour to it: Telling him plainly, *If it be so, our* v. 17, 18. *God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand: If not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden Image which thou hast set up.*

In like manner, and with the same Spirit and Courage, *Daniel* withstood the Decree of *Darius*, which forbad Men to *ask a Petition of any God or Man* for

Dan. 6. 7. *for thirty days, save of the King only*; and this under the pain of being *cast into the Den of Lions*: and when all others gave Obedience to it, he *set open the windows of his chamber towards Jerusalem, and kneeled down upon his knees*
v. 10. *three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks, as he did afore-time.*

In the prevalency of the *Arian* Heresie *Athanasius* almost stood alone in the profession and maintenance of the Truth. And in the Reign of *Antichrist* the *true Church* of God is represented by a *Woman* flying into the *Wilderness*, and living there in obscurity for a long time; insomuch that the Professors of the Truth should hardly be found. And yet during that Degeneracy of so great a Part of the *Christian* Church, and the prevalency of *Antichrist* for so many Ages, some few in every Age did appear who did resolutely own the Truth and bear Witness to it with their Blood: But these did almost stand alone and by themselves, like a few scattered Sheep wandring up and down in a wide *Wilderness*.

Thus, in the heighth of *Popery*, *Wickliffe* appear'd here in *England*; and *Hierome* of *Prague* and *John Huss* in *Germany* and *Bohemia*. And in the beginning of the *Reformation*, when *Popery* had quite over-run these *Western* Parts of the World and subdu'd her Enemies on every side, and *Antichrist* sate securely in the quiet possession of his Kingdom; *Luther* arose, a bold and rough Man, but a fit *Wedge* to cleave in sunder so hard and *knotty a Block*; and appear'd stoutly against the gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the Church of *Rome*; and for a long time stood alone, and with a most invincible Spirit and Courage maintain'd his ground and resisted the united malice and force of *Antichrist* and his *Adherents*; and gave him so terrible a Wound, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a Man to stand alone, or with a very few adhering to him and standing by him, is not a meer imaginary Supposition, but a Case that hath really and in fact happen'd in several Ages and Places of the World. Let us then proceed to consider in the

2d. place, The due *limits* and *bounds* of this peremptory Resolution. In all matters of *Faith* and *Practice* which are *plain* and *evident* either from *Natural Reason*, or from *Divine Revelation*, this *Resolution* seems to be very reasonable: But in things *doubtful* a modest Man, and every Man hath reason to be so, would be very apt to be stagger'd by the Judgment of a very Wise Man; and much more of many such, and especially by the unanimous Judgment of the generality of Men; the general Voice and Opinion of Mankind being next to the Voice of God himself.

For in matters of an *indifferent* nature, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden, such as are many of the *Circumstances* and *Ceremonies* of God's Worship, a Man would not be singular, much less stiff and immovable in his singularity; but would be apt to yield and surrender himself to the *general Vote* and *Opinion*, and to comply with the *common Custom* and *Practice*; and much more with the *Rules* and *Constitutions* of *Authority*, whether *Civil* or *Ecclesiastical*. Because in things *lawful* and *indifferent*, we are bound by the Rules of *Decency* and *Civility* not to thwart the *general Practice*; and by the *Commands* of *God*, we are certainly obliged to obey the *lawful Commands* of *lawful Authority*.

But in things plainly contrary to the evidence of *Sense* or *Reason*, or to the *Word of God*, a Man would complement no Man, or Number of Men; nor would he pin his Faith upon any *Church* in the World; much less upon any *single Man*, no not the *Pope*; no, though there were never so many probable Arguments brought for the proof of his *Infallibility*.

In this Case, a Man would be *singular*, and stand alone against the whole World: against the wrath and rage of a *King* and all the terrors of his *fiery Furnace*; as in other matters, a Man would not believe all the *Learned Men* in the World against the clear evidence of *Sense* and *Reason*. If all the great *Mathematicians* of all Ages, *Archimedes*, and *Euclide*, and *Apollonius*, and *Diophantus*, &c. could be supposed to meet together in a *General Council*, and should there declare in the most *solemn* manner, and give it under their *Hands* and *Seals*, that *twice two did not make four, but five*; this would not move me in the least to be of their mind; nay, I who am no *Mathematician* would maintain the contrary, and would persist in it without being in the least startled by the positive Opinion of these great and *learned Men*; and should most certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their Wits, or that they were byass'd by some Interest or other, and swayed against the clear evidence of Truth and the full conviction of their own Reason to make such a determination as this, They might indeed over-rule the Point by their Authority, but in my inward judgment I should still be where I was before.

Just so in matters of *Religion*, if any *Church*, though with never so glorious and confident a pretence to *Infallibility*, should declare for *Transubstantiation*, that is, that the *Bread* and *Wine* in the *Sacrament*, by virtue of the *Consecration* of the *Priest*, are substantially changed into the *natural Body* and *Blood* of *Christ*; this is so notoriously contrary both to the *Sense* and Reason of Mankind, that a Man should chuse to stand single in the opposition of it, and laugh at or rather pity the rest of the World that could be so servilely blind as seemingly to conspire in the belief of so *monstrous* an *Absurdity*.

And in like manner, if any Church should declare, that *Images* are to be Worshipped, or that the Worship of God is to be performed in an *unknown Tongue*; and that the *H. Scriptures*, which contain the World and Will of God, and teach Men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal Salvation, are to be lock'd up and kept concealed from the People in a Language which they do not understand, lest if they were permitted the free use of them in their *Mother Tongue* they should know more of the Mind and Will of God than is convenient for the common People to know, whose *Devotion* and *Obedience* to the Church does mainly depend upon their *Ignorance*: Or should declare, that the *Sacrifice* of *Christ* was not offer'd *once for all*, but is and ought to be repeated ten Millions of times every Day: And that the *People* ought to receive the *Communion in one kind only*, and the *Cup* by no means to be trusted with them for fear the *Profane Beards* of the *Laity* should drink of it: And that the *saving efficacy* of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the *intention of the Priest*, without which the Receiver can have no benefit by them; These are all of them so plainly contrary to *Scripture*, and most of them in *Reason* so absurd, that the Authority of no Church whatsoever can oblige a Man to the belief of them.

Nay, I go yet further, that being evidently contrary to the Doctrine of the *Gospel*, though an *Apostle*, or an *Angel from Heaven* should declare them, we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. *Paul*'s Authority and Warrant, who speaking of some that perverted the *Gospel* of *Christ* by teaching things contrary to it, *Though we*, says he, *or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed: As we said before, so say I now again, though an Apostle, though an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed.* You see he repeats it over again, to express not only his own confident assurance, but the certainty Gal. 1. 7, 8, 9.

certainty of the thing. And here is an *Anathema* with a witness, which we may confidently oppose to all the *Anathema*'s which the *Council* of *Trent* hath so liberally denounced against all those who shall presume to gainsay these *New Doctrines* of their Church; which are in truth *another Gospel*, than that which our *B. Saviour* and his *Apostles* taught: And yet on their Side there is neither an *Apostle*, nor an *Angel from Heaven* in the Case.

To give but one *Instance* more: If *Bellarmin* shall tell me, as he expresly does, That *if the Pope should declare Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue, I were bound to believe him unless I would sin against Conscience:* And if all the World should say the same that *Bellarmin* does, namely, that this *Infallible Declarer* of *Virtue* and *Vice* were to be believed and followed; yet I could not possibly be of their mind, for this plain and undeniable Reason; because if *Virtue* and *Vice* be all one, then Religion is nothing; since the main Design of Religion is to teach men the difference between *Virtue* and *Vice*, and to oblige them to practise the *one* and to refrain from the *other:* And if Religion be nothing, then Heaven and Hell are nothing: And if Heaven be nothing, then an *infallible Guide* thither is of no use and to no manner of purpose; because he is a Guide no whither, and so his great *Office* ceases and falls of it self.

And now lest any should think me singular in this *Assertion*, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the single Judgment of private Persons, and too little to the Authority of a Church, I will produce the deliberate Judgment of a very Learned Man and a great Assertor of the Church's Authority, concerning the matter I am now speaking of: I mean Mr. *Hooker*, in his deservedly admired *Book* of *Ecclesiastical Policy*. His words are these, *I grant*, says he, *that Proof derived from the Authority of Man's Judgment is not able to work that Assurance which doth grow by stronger proof: and therefore although ten thousand General Councils should set down one and the same Definitive Sentence concerning any Point of Religion whatsoever, yet one Demonstrative Reason alledged, or one Testimony cited from the Word of God himself to the contrary, could not chuse but oversway them all: In as much as for them to be deceived it is not so impossible, as it is that Demonstrative Reason or Divine Testimony should deceive.*

And again, *For men*, says he, *to be tyed and led by Authority, as it were with a kind of Captivity of Judgment, and though there be Reason to the contrary not to listen to it, but follow like Beasts the first in the Herd, this were Brutish.*

Again, *That the Authority of Men should prevail with Men, either against or above Reason is no part of* OUR *Belief. Companies of Learned Men, though they be never so great and Reverend, are to yield unto Reason, the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by the simplicity of the Person which doth alledge it; but being found to be sound and good, the bare Opinion of men to the contrary must of necessity stoop and give place.* And this he delivers not only as his own particular Judgment, but that which he apprehended to be the Judgment of the *Church of England*.

I have produced these clear and positive *Testimonies* of so learned and judicious a Person, and of so great esteem in our Church, on purpose to prevent any misapprehension, as if by this Discourse I intended to derogate from the Authority of the Church and her just and reasonable Determinations, in things no-wise contrary to plain *Reason* or the *Word of God*. And beyond this pitch no judicious *Protestant*, that I know of, ever strain'd the Authority of the Church. I proceed now in the

*Second*

*Second* place, to vindicate the *Reasonableness* of this *Resolution* from the *Objections* to which this *singular* and *peremptory* kind of *Resolution* may seem liable; as

*First*, It may very speciously be said, that this does not seem modest for a man to set up his own private Judgment against the general Suffrage and Vote. And it is very true, as I said before, that about things *indifferent* a man should not be stiff and singular; and in things *doubtful* and *obscure* a man should not be over-confident of his own Judgment, and insist peremptorily upon it against the general Opinion: But in things that are plain and evident, either from *Scripture* or *Reason*, it is neither immodesty, nor a culpable singularity, for a man to stand alone in the defence of the Truth. Because in such a Case a man does not oppose his own single and private Judgment to the Judgment of *Many*, but the common Reason of Mankind and the Judgment of God plainly declared in his Word. Object. 1.

If the generality of men should turn *Atheists* and *Infidels*, and should deny the *Being* of God, or his *Providence*; the *Immortality* of men's Souls, and the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of another World: Or should deny the Truth of the *Gospel* and of the *Christian* Religion, it would not certainly be any breach of modesty for a man to appear single, if no body else would stand by him, in the resolute defence of these great Truths.

In like manner, when a whole Church, though never so large and numerous, shall conspire together to corrupt the *Christian* Religion so far as to impose upon Mankind, under the name of *Christian Doctrines* and *Articles* of *Faith*, things plainly contrary to the Sense and Reason of Mankind, and to the clear and express Word of God, why must a Man needs be thought immodest, if he oppose such gross Errors and Corruptions of the *Christian* Doctrine? And what Reason have the *Church* of *Rome* to talk of modesty in this Case, when they themselves have the face to impose upon Mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man else sees? As they do in their Doctrine of Transubstantiation: And to require of them to do what God hath expresly forbidden, as in the Worship of *Images*; besides a great many other *Idolatrous* Practices of that Church: To deny the People the free use of the *H. Scriptures*, and the *publick Service* of God in a *known Tongue*; contrary to the very end and design of all Religion, and in affront to the common Reason and Liberty of Mankind.

*Secondly*, It is pretended that it is more prudent for private Persons to err with the Church, than to be so pertinacious in their own Opinions. To which I answer, that it may indeed be pardonable in some Cases to be led into mistake by the Authority of those to whose Judgment and Instruction we ought to pay a great deference and submission: Provided always it be in things which are not plain and necessary; but surely it can never be prudent to err with any number, how great soever, in matters of Religion which are of moment, merely for *Numbers* sake: But comply to with the *known Errors* and *Corruptions* of any Church whatsoever is certainly damnable. Object. 2.

*Thirdly*, It is pretended yet further, that men shall sooner be excused in following the *Church*, than any particular *Man* or *Sect*. To this I answer, that it is very true if the matter be doubtful, and especially if the Probabilities be equal, or near equal on both Sides: But if the Error be gross and palpable, it will be no excuse to have followed any number of Men, or any Church whatsoever. For here the competition is not between Men and Men, but between God and Men: And in this Case we must forsake all Men Object. 3.

to

to follow God and his Truth. *Thou shalt in no wise follow a Multitude in a known Error*, is a *Rule* which in Reason is of equal obligation with that *Divine Law*, *Thou shalt in no-wise follow a Multitude to do evil*; or rather is comprehended in it, because to *comply* with a *known Error* is certainly to *do Evil*.

And this very *Objection* the *Jews* made against our *B. Saviour* and the Doctrine which He taught, that the *Guides* and *Governours* of the *Jewish* Church did utterly differ from *Him*, and were of a contrary mind, *Have any of the Rulers*, say they, *believed on him?* What? will you be wiser than your Rulers and Governors? What? follow the Doctrine of *one single Man* against the unanimous Judgment and Sentence of the *Great Sanhedrim*, to whom the Trial of *Doctrines* and pretended *Prophets* doth of right belong?

But, as plausible as this *Objection* may seem to be, it is to be considered that in a corrupt and degenerate Church the *Guides* and *Rulers* of it are commonly the worst, and the most deeply engaged in the *Errors* and *Corruptions* of it. They brought them in at first; and their Successors, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concern'd to uphold and maintain them: And so *long a Prescription* gives a kind of *Sacred Stamp* even to *Error*, and an Authority not to be opposed and resisted.

And thus it was in the corrupt State of the *Jewish* Church, in our *Saviour*'s Time: And so likewise in that great Degeneracy of the *Christian* Church, in the Times of *Popery*, *their Rulers made them to err:* Insomuch that when *Martin Luther* appeared in opposition to the *Errors* and *Superstitions* of that Church, and was hard prest with this very *Objection* which the *Pharisees* urged against our *Saviour*, he was forc'd to bolt out a kind of *unmannerly Truth*, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter Reverendissimos*; *Religion*, says he, *is never in greater hazard and worse treated, than amongst the most Reverend*; meaning the *Pope* and his *Cardinals*, and all the *Romish Hierarchy* who had their dependence upon them.

Object. 4. *Fourthly*, It is *Objected*, That as on the one hand there may be danger of *Error* in following blindly the Belief of the Church, so on the other hand there is as great a danger of *Schism* in forsaking the communion of the Church upon pretence of *Errors* and *Corruptions*. Very true; but where great *Errors* and *Corruptions* are not only pretended, but are real and evident: and where our *Compliance* with those *Errors* and *Corruptions* is made a *necessary Condition* of our *Communion* with that *Church:* In that Case, the guilt of *Schism*, how great a Crime soever it be, doth not fall upon those who forsake the *Communion* of that *Church*, but upon those who drive them out of it by the *sinful Conditions* which they impose upon them.

And this is truly the *Case* between *Us* and the *Church* of *Rome*, as we are ready to make good, and have fully done it upon all Occasions; and they have never yet been able to vindicate and clear themselves of those gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* which have been charged upon them, and which they require of all their *Members* as *necessary Conditions* of *Communion* with them here, and of *eternal Salvation* hereafter.

For we do not object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any are contained in the *Bible*, as every body would see if they durst but let every body read it. The *Worship* of *Images* is there as plainly forbidden in the *Decalogue*, as *Murther* and *Adultery* are. The *Communion* in *both Kinds* is as express an *Institution* of our *Saviour*, as any in all the *New Testament:* and even as the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* it self; only *that Church* pretends to a *Dispensing Power*, as a *Priviledge inherent* in their Church, and *inseparable* from it.

And

And, to add but one *Instance* more; *Publick Prayers*, and the *Service* of God in an *unknow Tongue*, are as plainly and fully declared against by St. *Paul*, in a long *Chapter* upon this single Argument, as any one thing in all his *Epistles*.

These things are plain and undeniable, and being so, are a full justification not only of the *Church* of *England*, in the *Reformation* which She thought fit to make within her self from the gross *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Church* of *Rome*; but likewise of *particular Persons* who have at any time for the same Reasons withdrawn themselves from Her Communion, in any of the *Popish* Countries: Yea though that *single Person* should happen to be in those Circumstances that he could not have the Opportunity of holding Communion with any *other Church*, that was free from those *Errors* and *Corruptions*, and which did not impose them as *necessary Conditions* of *Communion*.

For if any *Church* fall off to *Idolatry*, every good *Christian* not only may, but ought to forsake *Her Communion*; and ought rather to stand single and alone in the Profession of the pure and true Religion, than to continue in the *Communion* of a *corrupt* and *Idolatrous Church*.

I know that some Men are so fond of the *Name* of a *Church* that they can very hardly believe that any thing which bears that glorious *Title* can miscarry or do any thing so much amiss as to give just occasion to any of her *Members* to break off from *Her Communion*: What? *the Church err?* That is such an *Absurdity*, as is by many thought sufficient to put any *Objection* out of countenance. That the *whole Church*, that is, that *all the Christians* in the World should at any time fall off to *Idolatry* and into *Errors* and *Practices* directly contrary to the *Christian Doctrine* revealed in the *H. Scriptures*, is on all hands, I think, denied: But that any Particular Church may fall into such *Errors* and *Practices* is, I think, as universally granted: Only in this Case they demanded to have the *Roman Catholick Church* excepted: And why I pray? Because though the *Roman Church* is a *Particular Church*, it is also the *Universal Church*: If this can be, and good sense can be made of a *Particular-Universal Church*, then the *Roman Church* may demand this high Privilege of being exempted from the Fate of all other Churches; but if the *Roman Catholick*, that is a *Particular-Universal Church* be a gross and palpable *Contradiction*, then it is plain that the *Church* of *Rome* hath no more pretence to this *Privilege*, than any other *Particular Church* whatsoever.

And which is yet more, some men talk of these matters, at that rate, as if a man who thought himself obliged to quit the Communion of the *Church* of *Rome*, should happen to be in those Circumstances that he had no Opportunity of joining himself to any other Communion, he ought in that Case to give over all thoughts of Religion, and not be so conceited and presumptuous as to think of going to Heaven alone by himself.

It is without doubt a very great Sin to despise the Communion of the Church, or to break off from it so long as we can continue in it without Sin: But if things should once come to that *Pass* that we must either disobey God for company, or stand alone in our obedience to Him, we ought most certainly to obey God whatever comes of it; and to profess his Truth, whether any body else will join with us in that Profession or not.

And they who speak otherwise condemn the whole *Reformation*, and do in effect say that *Martin Luther* had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the *Church* of *Rome*, if no body else would have joined with him in that honest Design. And yet if it had been so, I hope God would have given him the Grace and Courage to have stood alone in so good and glorious a *Cause*, and to have laid down his Life for it.

And for any man to be of another Opinion, is just as if a man upon great deliberation should chuse rather to be drowned, than to be saved either by a *Plank* or a *small Boat*; or to be carried into the Harbour any other way, than in a *Great Ship* of so many *hundred Tuns*.

In short, a good man must resolve to obey God and to profess his Truth, though all the World should happen to do otherwise. *Christ* hath promised to preserve his Church *to the end of the World*, that is, he hath engaged his Word that he will take care that there shall always be in some part of the World or other, some persons that shall make a sincere Profession of his true Religion.

But He hath no where promised to preserve any *one Part* of his Church from such *Errors* and *Corruptions*, as may oblige all good men to quit the Communion of *that Part*; yea though when they have done so, they may not know whither to resort for actual Communion with any other *sound Part* of the *Christian* Church. As it happened to some particular Persons, during the Reign and Rage of *Popery* in these *Western* Parts of the *Christian* Church.

The Result from all this *Discourse* is, to confirm and establish us all, in this *Hour of Temptation* and of *the Powers of Darkness*, in the well-grounded Belief of the necessity and justice of our *Reformation* from the *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Roman* Church. And to engage us *to hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering:* And not only to profess and promise as *Peter* did to our *Lord, though all men forsake thee, yet will not I:* But if there should be Occasion, to perform and make good this promise with the hazard of all that is dear to us, and even of Life it self. And whatever Trials God may permit any of us to fall into, to take up the pious Resolution of *Joshua* here in the *Text*, that whatever others do, *WE will serve the Lord*.

I will conclude my *Discourse*, upon this *First Particular* in the *Text*, with
chap. 1. the *Exhortation* of St. *Paul* to the *Philippians: Only let your Conversation be*
v. 27. *as it becometh the Gospel of Christ. Stand fast in one Spirit, be of one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel: In nothing terrified by your Adversaries, which to them is an evident token of Perdition, but to you of Salvation, and that of God.*

And thus much may suffice to have spoken to the *First* thing in the *Text*, namely, the pious Resolution of *Joshua*, that if there were Occasion and things were brought to that extremity, he would stand alone in the Profession and Practice of God's true Religion: *Chuse you this Day whom ye will serve, but as for ME, I will serve the Lord.*

I should now have proceeded to the *Second* thing, and which indeed I chiefly intended to speak to from this *Text*, namely, the *pious Care* of a good *Father* and *Master* of a *Family*, to train up those under his Charge in the *Religion* and *Worship* of the *true God: As for Me and MY HOUSE, we will serve the Lord.* But this I shall not now enter upon, but defer it to some other Opportunity. *Consider what ye have heard, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.*

SER-

# SERMON L.

## Concerning
# FAMILY-RELIGION.

Preached at

St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *July* the 13*th*. 1684.

## Josh. XXIV. 15.

*--But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.*

I Shall now proceed to the *Second Point* contained in the *Text*, namely,

II. The *pious Care* of a good *Maſter* and *Father* of a *Family*, to train up thoſe under his Charge in the Worſhip and Service of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will ſerve the Lord.*

And this is the more neceſſary to be ſpoken to, becauſe it is a great and very eſſential part of Religion, but ſtrangely overlook'd and neglected in this looſe and degenerate Age in which we live. It is a great part of Religion; for next to our *perſonal Homage* and *Service* to *Almighty God*, and the Care of our own Souls, it is incumbent upon us to make thoſe, who are under our Charge and ſubject to our Authority, God's Subjects, and his Children and Servants; which is a much more honourable and happy Relation, than that which they bear to us.

Our *Children* are a *natural* part of our ſelves, and the reſt of our Family are a *Civil* and *Political* part: And not only we our ſelves, but all that we have and that belongs to us is God's, and ought to be devoted to his ſervice. And they that have the true Fear of God themſelves, will be careful to teach it to others; to thoſe eſpecially who are under their more immediate Care and Inſtruction. And therefore God had ſo great a confidence concerning *Abraham* as to this particular, as to undertake for him, that being ſo very good a Man himſelf he would not fail in ſo great and neceſſary a part of his Duty, *For I know him*, ſays *God* of him, *that he will command his Children and his Houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment.* God paſſes his Word for him, that he would not only take care to inſtruct his *Children* and the reſt of his numerous *Family* in the true Religion, but that he would likewiſe lay a ſtrict Charge upon them to propagate and tranſmit it to their Poſterity.

And this certainly is the Duty of all *Fathers* and *Maſters* of *Families*; and an eſſential part of Religion, next to ſerving God in our own Perſons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the ſame. For every Man muſt not only give an account of himſelf to God, but of thoſe likewiſe that are committed to his Charge that they do not miſcarry through his neglect.

In ſpeaking of this great and neceſſary Duty I ſhall do theſe *four* things.

*Firſt*, I ſhall ſhew wherein it doth conſiſt.

*Secondly*, I ſhall conſider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Intereſt.*

*Thirdly*, I ſhall enquire into the *Cauſes* of the ſo common and ſhameful neglect of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great Decay of Piety amongſt us.

*Fourthly*, As a *Motive* and *Argument* to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this Duty, I ſhall repreſent to you the pernicious *Conſequences* of the neglect of it, both with regard to our *Selves* and to *the Publick*. In all which I ſhall be very brief, becauſe things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I ſhall ſhew wherein the Practice of this Duty doth conſiſt. And in this I am ſure there is no need to be long, becauſe this Duty is much beter known than practiſed. The principal *Parts* of it are theſe following.

*Firſt*, By ſetting up the conſtant Worſhip of God in our Families. By *daily Prayers* to God, every *Morning* and *Evening*; and by reading ſome Portion of the *H. Scriptures* at thoſe Times, eſpecially out of the *Pſalms* of *David*, and the *New Teſtament*. And this is ſo neceſſary to keep alive and to maintain a ſenſe of God and Religion in the Minds of Men, that where it is neglected I do not ſee how any Family can in reaſon be eſteemed a Family of *Chriſtians*, or indeed, to have any Religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent *Helps* to this purpoſe for thoſe that ſtand in need of them, as I think moſt Families do for the due and decent diſcharge of this ſolemn Duty of *Prayer:* I ſay, there are excellent Helps to this purpoſe, in the ſeveral *Books* of *Devotion* calculated for the private uſe of Families, as well as for *Secret Prayers* in our *Cloſets*.

So that beſides the reading of the *H. Scriptures*, which are the great Fountains of *Divine Truth*; we may well do likewiſe to add to theſe other pious and profitable *Books*, which by their plainneſs are fitted for the inſtruction of all Capacities in the moſt neceſſary Points of *Belief* and *Practice:* Of which ſort, God be thanked, there is an abundant ſtore; but none that I think is more fitted for general and conſtant uſe than that *excellent Book* ſo well known by the *Title* of *The whole Duty of Man*; Becauſe it is conveniently divided into *Parts* or *Sections*; one of which may be read in the *Family*, at any time when there is leiſure for it; but more eſpecially on the *Lord's Day*, when the whole Family may the more eaſily be brought and kept together, and have the Opportunity to attend upon theſe things without diſtraction.

And, which I muſt by no means omit, becauſe it is in many Families already gone, and in others going out of Faſhion: I mean a ſolemn acknowledgment of the Providence of God, by begging his *Bleſſing* at our *Meals*, upon his good Creatures provided for our uſe; and by returning *Thanks* to him for the benefit and refreſhment of them: This being a piece of *Natural Religion* owned and practiſed in all Ages, and in moſt places of the World; but never ſo ſhamefully and ſcandalouſly neglected, and I fear by many ſlighted and deſpiſed, as it is amongſt us at this Day: And moſt neglected where there is greateſt Reaſon for the doing of it, I mean, at the moſt plentiful *Tables*, and among thoſe of higheſt Quality: As if Great Perſons were aſhamed, or thought ſcorn to own from whence theſe Bleſſings come; like the Nation of the *Jews*, of whom God complains
Hoſ. 1. 8. in the *Prophet*, *She knew not that I gave Her Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and multiply'd her Silver and Gold*; *She knew not*, that is, She would not acknowledge from whoſe *Bounty* all theſe *Bleſſings* came: Or, as if the *poor* were

were obliged to thank God for a little, but thoſe who are *fed to the full*, and whoſe *Cups overflow*, ſo that they are almoſt every day ſurfeited of plenty, were not at leaſt equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the *Great Giver* of all good things; and to implore *His* Bounty and Bleſſing, upon whom *the eyes of all do wait*, that *He may give them their meat in due ſeaſon.*

*O crooked and perverſe Generation!* Do you thus reaſon? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, fooliſh and unwiſe?* This is a very ſad and broad Sign of the prevalency of *Atheiſm* and *Infidelity* among us, when ſo *Natural* and ſo *Reaſonable* a piece of *Religion*, ſo meet and equal an acknowledgment of the conſtant and daily Care and Providence of Almighty God towards us begins to grow out of Date and Uſe; in a Nation profeſſing Religion, and the Belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God. Is it not a righteous thing with God to take away his Bleſſings from us, when we deny Him this juſt and eaſie Tribute of Praiſe and Thankſgiving? *Shall not God viſit for* this horrible *Ingratitude: And ſhall not his Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this? Hear, O Heavens, and be ye horribly aſtoniſhed at this!* I hope it cannot be thought misbecoming the meaneſt of God's Miniſter's, in a matter wherein the Honour of God is ſo nearly concern'd, to reprove, even in the Higheſt and Greateſt of the Sons of Men, ſo ſhameful and heinous a Fault, with a proportionable Vehemence and Severity.

*Secondly*, Another, and that alſo a very conſiderable *Part* of this *Duty*, conſiſts in inſtructing thoſe committed to our Charge in the *Fundamental Principles*, and in the careful *Practice* of the *neceſſary Duties* of Religion; inſtilling theſe into *Children* in their tender years, as they are capable of them, *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*, *here a little and there a little*; and into thoſe that are more *grown up*, by proper and ſuitable means of inſtruction, and by furniſhing them with ſuch *Books* as are moſt proper to teach them thoſe things in Religion which are moſt neceſſary by all to be believ'd and practis'd.

And in order hereunto we ſhould take care that thoſe under our Charge, our *Children* and *Servants*, ſhould be taught to read, becauſe this will make the buſineſs of Inſtruction much eaſier; ſo that if they are diligent and well-diſpos'd, they may, after having been taught the *firſt Principles* of Religion, by reading the *H. Scriptures* and other good *Books*, greatly improve themſelves, ſo as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the publick teaching of their Miniſters.

And in this work of *Inſtruction* our great care ſhould be to plant thoſe *Principles* of Religion in our *Children* and *Servants* which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary, and are like to have the greateſt and moſt laſting influence upon their whole Lives: As right and worthy Apprehenſions of God, eſpecially of his infinite Goodneſs, and that *He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity:* And a lively ſenſe alſo of the great evil and danger of Sin: A firm belief of the Immortality of our Souls, and of the unſpeakable and endleſs Rewards and Puniſhments of another World. If theſe *Principles* once take root, they will ſpread ſtrangely, and probably ſtick by them and continue with them all their Days.

Whereas, if we plant in them *doubtful Doctrines* and *Opinions*, and inculcate upon them the *Notions* of a *Sect*, and the *Jargon* of a *Party*, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we muſt expect that our *Harveſt* will be anſwerable to our *Husbandry: We have ſown the Wind, and ſhall reap the Whirlwind.* But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly and fully in the enſuing *Sermons* concerning *the good Education of Children.*

And

And this work of *Instruction* of those that are under our Charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other Times, so it is more peculiarly seasonable on the *Lord's Day*, which ought to be employed by us to Religious Purposes, and in the Exercises of Piety and Devotion: Chiefly in the *Publick Worship* and *Service* of God, upon which we should take care that our *Children* and *Servants* should diligently and devoutly attend. Because there Gods affords the *Means* which he hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of Piety and Goodness, and to which he hath promised a more especial Blessing: There they will have the opportunity of joining in the *publick Prayers* of God's Church, and of sharing in the unspeakable benefit and advantage of them: And there they will also have the advantage of being instructed by the Ministers of God in the Doctrine of Salvation, and the way to Eternal Life; and of being powerfully incited to the practice of Piety and Virtue.

*There* likewise they will be invited to the *Lord's Table*, to participate of the *H. Sacrament* of *Christ's* most blessed *Body* and *Blood*; which being the most *Solemn Institution* of the *Christian* Religion, the frequent participation whereof, is by our *B. Lord*, in remembrance of his *Dying-Love*, enjoined upon all *Christians*, we ought to take a very particular care, that those who are under our Charge, so soon as they are capable of it, be duly instructed and prepared for it; that so, as often as Opportunity is offer'd for it, they may be present at this Holy Action, and partake of the inestimable Benefits and Comforts of it.

And when the *Publick Worship* of *that Day* is over, our Families should be instructed at *Home*, by having the *Scriptures* and other good *Books* read to them; and care likewise should be taken that they do this themselves; this being the chief Opportunity that most of them, especially those that are *Servants*, have of minding the business of Religion, and thinking seriously of another World.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great consequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of Religion in the World, that this *Day* be Religiously observed, and spent as much as may be in the exercises of Piety, and in the care of our Souls. For surely every one that hath a true sense of Religion will grant, that it is necessary that some Time should be solemnly set apart for this purpose, which is of all other our greatest Concernment: And they who neglect this so proper Season and Opportunity, will hardly find any other Time for it: Especially those who are under the Government and Command of others, as *Children* and *Servants*, who are seldom upon any other Day allowed to be so much Masters of their Time, as upon *this Day*.

*Thirdly*, I add further, as a considerable *Part* of the *Duty* of *Parents* and *Masters* of *Families*, if they be desirous to have their *Children* and *Servants* Religious in good earnest, and would set them forward in the way to Heaven, that they do not only allow them Time and Opportunity, but that they do also strictly and earnestly charge them to retire themselves every Day; but more especially on the *Lord's Day*, Morning and Evening, to *pray* to God for the Forgiveness of their Sins, and for his Mercy and Blessing upon them; and likewise to *Praise* Him for all his Favours and Benefits conferr'd upon them from Day to Day.

And in order to this, they ought to take care that their *Children* and *Servants* be furnish'd with such short *Forms* of *Prayer* and *Praise*, as are proper and suitable to their capacities and conditions respectively; because

there

there are but very few that know how to set about and perform these *Duties*, especially at first, without some *Helps* of this kind.

*Fourthly* and *lastly*, another principal *Part* of this *Duty* consists in giving *good Example* to our *Families*. This was *David*'s Resolution, *Psal.* 101. 2. *I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way, I will walk within my House with a perfect heart.* Take great care to be *exemplary* to thy Family in the best things; in a constant and devout serving of God, and in a sober and prudent and unblameable Conversation.

One of the best and most effectual ways to make those who are under our Care and Authority good, is to be good our Selves, and by our good Example to shew them the way to be so. Without this our best Instructions will signifie but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be lost. We undermine the best Instructions we can give, when they are not seconded and confirmed by our own Example, and Practice. The want of this will weaken the Authority of all our good Counsel, and very little Reverence and Obedience will be paid to it. The Precepts and Admonitions of a very good Man have in them a great power of Persuasion, and are apt strongly to move and to inflame others to *go and do likewise:* But the good Instructions of a bad Man are languid and faint, and of very little force; because they give no heart and encouragement to follow that Counsel which they see he that gives it does not think fit to take himself. But of this likewise I shall have Occasion to speak more fully in the following *Discourses* concerning the *good Education of Children*. And thus much may suffice to have spoken of the *First* thing which I proposed, namely, wherein the Practice of this *Duty* doth consist. I proceed to the *Second*, namely;

II. To consider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Interest*.

*First*, In Point of *Duty*. All Authority over others is a *Talent* intrusted with us by God for the benefit and good of others; and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it and make use of it to that end. We are obliged by all lawful means to provide for the *temporal* welfare of our Family, to feed and cloath their *Bodies* and to give them a comfortable Subsistence here in the World: And surely much more are we obliged to take care of their *Souls*, and to consult their *eternal* Happiness in another Life; in comparison of which all *temporal* Concernments and Considerations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a *Father* or *Master* to suffer a *Child* to starve for want of the *necessaries* of Life, *food* and *raiment*, and all the World would cry shame upon them for it: But how much greater Cruelty must it in reason be thought to let an *immortal* Soul, and one *for whom Christ died*, perish for want of *knowledge* and *necessary Instruction* for the attaining of *eternal Salvation*?

The *Apostle* St. *Paul* thinks no words bad enough for those who neglect the *temporal* welfare of their Families, *He that provideth not*, saith he, *for his own, especially for those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel*, that is, he does not deserve the Name of a *Christian*, who neglects a Duty to which from the plain Dictates of *Nature* a *Heathen* thinks himself obliged. What then shall be said for them who take no care to provide for the everlasting Happiness, and to prevent the eternal Misery and Ruin of those who are so immediately under their Charge, and so very nearly related to them?

We

We are obliged to procure the Happineſs of our *Children* not only by the *Laws* of *Chriſtianity*, but likewiſe by all the *Natural* bonds of *Duty* and Affection. For our Children are a part of our Selves, and if they periſh by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual Wound and Sting to us; their Blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lye at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likewiſe in Juſtice, and by way of Reparation, to take all poſſible care of their Happineſs; for we have conveyed a ſad inheritance to them, in thoſe corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us: And therefore we ſhould with the greateſt care and diligence endeavour to rectifie their perverſe Natures, and to curſe thoſe curſed diſpoſitions to evil which we have tranſmitted to them: And ſince God hath been pleaſed in ſo much mercy to provide, by the abundant *Grace* of the *Goſpel*, ſo powerful a *Remedy* for this *hereditary Diſeaſe* of our corrupt and degenerate Nature, we ſhould do what in us lies, that they may partake of the Bleſſing and Benefit of it.

And as to other Members of our Family, whether they be *Servants*, or other *Relations* of whom we have taken the Charge; common *Humanity* will oblige us to be concerned for their Happineſs as they are *Men* and of the ſame Nature with our Selves; and *Charity* likewiſe, as they are *Chriſtians* and *Baptized* into the ſame *Faith* and capable of the ſame *common Salvation*, does yet more ſtrictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; eſpecially ſince they are committed to our Care, and for that reaſon we muſt expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our *Obligation* in point of *Duty* is very clear and ſtrong, and if we be remiſs and negligent in the diſcharge of it we can never anſwer it either to God, or to our own Conſciences: Which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it to the ſerious conſideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future to the faithful and conſcientious performance of it.

*Secondly*, We are hereto likewiſe *obliged* in point of *Intereſt*; becauſe it is really for our ſervice and advantage that thoſe that belong to us ſhould ſerve and fear God: Religion being the beſt and ſureſt Foundation of the *Duties* of all *Relations*, and the beſt Caution and Security for the true diſcharge and performance of them.

Would we have dutiful and obedient *Children*, diligent and faithful *Servants*? Nothing will ſo effectually oblige them to be ſo, as the Fear of God and the Principles of Religion firmly ſettled and rooted in them. *Abraham* who by the Teſtimony of God himſelf was ſo eminent an Example in this kind, both of a good *Father* and a good *Maſter* of his Family, found the good ſucceſs of his Religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his *Son Iſaac*, and his chief *Servant* and *Steward* of his Houſe, *Eliezer* of *Damaſcus*.

What an unexampled Inſtance of the moſt profound reſpect and obedience to the Commands of his Father did *Iſaac* give, when without the leaſt murmuring or reluctancy he ſubmitted to be bound and laid upon the Altar, and to have been ſlain for a Sacrifice; if God had not by an Angel, ſent on purpoſe, interpoſed to prevent it?

What an admirable *Servant* to *Abraham* was the Steward of his Houſe, *Eliezer* of *Damaſcus*? How diligent and faithful was he in his *Maſter*'s ſervice? So that he truſted him in his greateſt Concernments and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great Affair of the Marriage of his *Son Iſaac*, what pains did he take, what prudence did he uſe,

what fidelity did he shew in the discharge of that great Trust, giving himself no rest till he had accomplish'd the Business he was sent about? God seems purposely to have left these two *Instance's* upon Record in *Scripture*, to encourage *Fathers* and *Masters* of Families to a Religious care of their *Children* and *Servants*.

And to shew the power of Religion to oblige Men to their Duty, I will add but one Instance more. How did the fear of God secure *Joseph*'s fidelity to his *Master*, in the Case of a very great and violent Temptation? When there was nothing else to restrain him from so lewd and wicked an act, and to which he was so powerfully tempted, the consideration of the great trust his Master reposed in him, and the sense of his Duty to him, but above all, the *Fear of God* preserv'd him from consenting to so vile and wicked an action, *How can I*, says he, *do this great wickedness and sin against God*?

So that in prudence, and from a wise consideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound to us, we ought with the greatest care to instill the Principles of Religion into those that belong to us. For if the Seeds of true Piety be sown in them, we shall reap the fruits of it: And if this be neglected, we shall certainly find the mischief and inconvenience of it. If our *Children and Servants* be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they should reverence and regard us? at least we can have no sure hold of them. For nothing but Religion lays an obligation upon Conscience, nor is there any other certain bond of Duty, and Obedience, and Fidelity: Men will break loose from all other Ties, when a fit Occasion and a fair Opportunity doth strongly tempt them. And as Religion is necessary to procure the favour of God and all the comfort and happiness which that brings along with it, so it is necessary likewise to secure the mutual Duties and Offices of Men to one another. I proceed to the *Third* thing which I propos'd, namely,

III. To enquire into the *Causes* of the so common and shameful *Neglect* of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great decay of Piety among us. And this may in part be ascribed to our Civil Confusions and Distractions, but chiefly to our Dissentions and Differences in Religion, which have not only divided and scattered our *Parochial* Churches and *Congregations*, but have entred likewise into our *Families*, and made great disturbances and disorders there.

*First*, This may in good part be ascribed to our *Civil* Confusions and Distractions, which for the time do lay all *Laws* asleep, and do not only occasion a general Licentiousness and Dissoluteness of Manners, but have usually a proportionable bad influence upon the Order and Government of *Families*; by weakning the Authority of those that Govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater License to those that should be *governed*: For when *publick Laws* lose their Authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the strict *Rules* and *Order* of *Families*, which after great and long Disorder are very hard to be retriev'd and recover'd.

*Secondly*, This great Neglect and Decay of Religious Order in Families is chiefly owing to our Dissentions and Differences in Religion, upon occasion whereof many under the pretence of Conscience have broke loose into a boundless Liberty. So that among the manifold ill Consequences of our *Divisions* in Religion this is none of the least, that the Religious Order of Families hath been in a great measure broken and dissolved. Some will not meet at the same *Prayers* in the *Family*, nor go to the same *Church* and

Place of *publick Worship*; and upon that pretence take the liberty to do what they please, and under colour of serving God in a different way according to their Consciences, do either wholly or in great measure neglect the Worship of God; nay, it is well if they do not at that *Time* haunt and frequent Places of Debauchery and Lewdness; which they may safely do, being from under the eye of their *Parents* and *Masters*: However, by this means it becomes impossible for the most careful *Masters* of *Families*, to take an account of those under their Charge how they spend their time on the *Lord's Day*, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of Religion.

And this methinks is so great and sensible an inconvenience, and hath had such dismal effects in many Families, as ought effectually to convince us of the necessity of endeavouring a greater Union in matters of Religion; and to put us in mind of those happy Days when God was serv'd in one way and whole *Families went to the House of God in Companies*; and *Fathers* and *Masters* had their *Children* and *Servants* continually under their eye, and they were all united in their Worship and Devotion, both in their own Houses and in the House of God; and by this means the Work of Religious Education and Instruction was effectually carried on, and a steddy Authority and decent Order was maintained in Families; Men were edify'd and built up in Religion, and *God in all things* was *glorify'd*.

And we may assure our selves, that till we are better agreed in matters of Religion, and our unhappy and childish Differences are laid aside; and till the Publick and unanimous Worship of God do in some measure recover its Reputation, the good Order and Government of Families as to the great ends of Religion is never likely to obtain and to have any considerable effect. Which I hope will make all Men who heartily love God and Religion, to consider seriously how necessary it is to put an end to these Differences; that in our private Families, as well as in the publick Assemblies of the Church, we may *with one mind and with one mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Cor. 1. 10. *I beseech you therefore, Brethren*, as St. *Paul* exhorts the *Corinthians*, *by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*: that is, so far as is necessary to the *keeping of the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of* Peace, and to prevent *Divisions* and *Separations* among *Christians*. I proceed to the *Fourth* and last thing I proposed, and which remains to be very briefly spoken to, namely,

IV. The very mischievous and fatal *Consequences* of the neglect of this *Duty*, both to the *Publick*, and to *our Selves*.

*First*, To the *Publick*. *Families* are the first *Seminaries* of Religion, and if care be not there taken to prepare persons, especially in their tender years, for publick teaching and instruction, it is like to have but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our Children and Servants at *home* to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at *Church*, is like an error in the first Concoction which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that in this first neglect the foundation of an Infinite Mischief is laid; because if no care be taken of persons in their younger years, when they are most capable of the impressions of Religion, how can it reasonably be expected that they should come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the Fear of God, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almost necessarily be bad in all Relations; undu-

tiful

tiful Children, slothful and unfaithful Servants, scandalous Members of the Church, unprofitable to the Commonwealth, disobedient to Governours both Ecclesiastical and Civil; and in a word, Burthens of the Earth, and so many Plagues of Human Society: And this Evil, if no Remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worse, and diffuse and spread it self farther in every Age, till Impiety and Wickedness, Infidelity and Profaneness have over-run all, and the World be ripe for its final Ruin: Just as it was before the Destruction of the Old World, when *the wickedness of Man was great upon the Earth*, and *all Flesh had corrupted their way*, then *the Flood came and swept them all away*.

*Secondly*, The *Consequences* of this *Neglect* will likewise be very dismal to *our selves*. We shall first of all others feel the *Inconvenience*, as we had the greatest share in the *Guilt* of it. We can have no manner of security of the Duty and Fidelity of those of our Family to us, if they have no sense of Religion, no fear of God before their Eyes. If we have taken no care to instruct them in their Duty to God, it is no-wise probable that they will make Conscience of their Duty to us.

So that we shall have the first ill *Consequences* of their Miscarriage; besides the *Shame* and *Sorrow* of it: And not only so, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great measure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our score in the Judgment of the Great Day. It ought to make us tremble to think with what Bitterness and Rage our Children and Servants will then fly in our Faces, for having been the Cause of their eternal Ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In *that Day*, next to *God* and our *own Consciences*, our most terrible *Accusers* will be those of our own *House*, nay, those that came out of our own *Bowels*, and were not only Part of our *Family*, but even of our *Selves*. But this also I shall have a proper Occasion to prosecute more fully in the following *Discourses* concerning the *Education of Children*, to which I refer it.

Upon all these Considerations and many more that might be urged upon us, we should take up the pious Resolution of *Joshua* here in the Text, that *We and OUR HOUSES will serve the Lord:* And that, through God's Grace, we will do all that in us lies by our future Care and Diligence to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I shall only add this one *Consideration* more to all that I have already mentioned: If *Children* were carefully educated, and *Families* Regularly and Religiously ordered, what a happy and delightful Place, what a Paradise would this World be, in comparison of what now it is?

I beseech you therefore *Brethren*, that these things which I have with so much plainness and faithfulness laid before you, may sink into your hearts, before it be too late, and whilst the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect and repent of it, when the thing will be past Remedy and there will be no place for Repentance. *But I hope better things of you Brethren, and things that accompany Salvation, though I thus speak.*

# SERMON LI.

## OF THE

## *EDUCATION of CHILDREN.*

PROV. XXII. 6.

*Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

I Have on purpose chosen this *Text* for the subject of a Preparatory Discourse in order to the reviving of that so shamefully neglected and yet most useful and necessary Duty of *Catechising* children and young persons: But I shall extend it to the consideration of the *Education* of *Children* in general, as a matter of the greatest consequence both to Religion and the Publick welfare.

For we who are the Ministers of God ought not only to instruct those who are committed to our charge in the common Duties of Christianity, such as belong to all Christians, but likewise in all the particular Duties which the several Relations in which they stand to one another do respectively require and call for from them.

And amongst all these I know none that is of greater concernment to Religion and to the good Order of the World than the careful Education of Children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires a more prudent and diligent and constant application of our best care and endeavour.

It is a known Saying of *Melancthon* that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere*; to *bear and bring forth Children*, to *instruct and bring them up to be Men*, and *to govern them when they arrive at Man's estate. The instruction* and *good Education of Children* is none of the least difficult of these. For to do it to the best advantage does not only require great sagacity to discern their particular disposition and temper, but great discretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewise continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to Religion and Virtue.

It requires great wisdom and industry to advance a considerable Estate, much art and contrivance and pains to raise a great and regular Building: But the greatest and noblest Work in the World, and an effect of the greatest prudence and care is to rear and build up a Man, and to form and fashion him to Piety, and Justice, and Temperance, and all kind of honest and worthy actions. Now the Foundations of this great Work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of Children, that it may rise and grow up with

them;

them; according to the advice of the *Wiseman* here in the *Text*, *Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained these *two* things.

*First*, The Duty of Parents and Instructers of Children, *Train up a Child*, &c. By *Childhood* here I understand the Age of Persons from their Birth, but more especially from their first capacity of Instruction till they arrive at the State and Age which next succeeds *Childhood*, and which we call *Youth*; and which is the proper Season for *Confirmation*. For when Children have been well *Catechised* and instructed in Religion, then is the fittest Time for them to take upon themselves and in their own Persons to confirm that *solemn Vow* which by their *Sureties* they made at their *Baptism*.

*Train up a Child in the way he should go*, that is, in the course of Life that he ought to lead; instruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty to God and Men, which he ought to observe and perform all the days of his Life.

*Secondly*, Here is the consequent fruit and benefit of good Education: *And when he is old he will not depart from it.* This we are to understand according to the moral probability of things: Not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good Education of a Child, but that this very frequently is, and may probably be presumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent Education. *Solomon* means that from the very nature of the thing this is the most hopeful and likely way to train up a Child to be a good Man. For as *Aristotle* truly observes, *Moral Sayings* and *Proverbial Speeches* are to be understood only ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, that is, to be usually and *for the most part* true. And though there may be several *exceptions* made and *instances* given to the contrary, yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them: But if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, because it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this *Aphorism* or *Proverb* of *Solomon* in the *Text*; and so likewise are most of the *wise Sayings* of this *Book* of the *Proverbs*, as also of *Ecclesiastes*: And we do greatly mistake the design and meaning of them whenever we go about to exact them to a more strict and rigorous truth, and shall upon due consideration find it impossible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the *Text* may be fully comprised in the following *Proposition*.

*That the careful, and prudent, and religious Education of Children hath for the most part a very good influence upon the whole course of their lives.*

In the handling of this Argument I design, by God's assistance, to reduce my Discourse to these *Five Heads*.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, and severally consider the principal parts of it.

II. I shall give some more particular Directions for the management of this work in such a way as may be most effectual for its end.

III. I shall take notice of some of the common and more remarkable miscarriages in the performance of this Duty.

IV. I shall endeavour to make out the truth of this *Proposition*, by shewing how the good Education of Children comes to be of so great advantage and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole Lives.

V. And *lastly*; I shall by the most powerful Arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and perswade those whose Duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

I. I shall

I. I shall shew more generally *wherein the good Education of Children doth consist*, and severally consider *the principal* Parts of it. And under this *Head* I shall comprehend promiscuously the Duty of *Parents*, and, in case of their death, of *Guardians*; and of *God-fathers* and *God-mothers*; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them, because the Children for whom they are *Sureties* are seldom under their power: And the Duty likewise of those who are the *Teachers* and *Instructers* of them: And the Duty also of *Masters of Families* towards *Servants* in their childhood and younger years: And lastly, the Duty of *Ministers*, under whose *Parochial* care and inspection Children are as members of the Families committed to their charge: I say, under this *Head* I shall comprehend the Duties of all these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these *eight* particulars, as the principal parts wherein the Education of Children doth consist.

*First*, In the tender and careful nursing of them.

*Secondly*, In bringing them to be baptised and admitted Members of *Christ's* Church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members.

*Thirdly*, In a due care to inform and instruct them in the whole compass of their Duty to *God* and to their *Neighbour*.

*Fourthly*, And more especially in a prudent and diligent care to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Vertue.

*Fifthly*, In giving them good Example.

*Sixthly*, In wise restraints from that which is Evil, by seasonable Reproof and Correction.

*Seventhly*, In bringing them to be publickly Catechised by the Minister in order to Confirmation.

*Eighthly*, In bringing them to the Bishop to be solemnly Confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the Vow which by their Sureties they enter'd into at their Baptism.

I. *In the tender and careful nursing of Children.* I mention this first, because it is the first and most natural Duty incumbent upon Parents towards their Children: And this is particularly the Duty of Mothers. This affection and tenderness, Nature which is our surest guide and director, hath implanted in all living Creatures towards their young ones: And there cannot be a greater reproach to Creatures that are endued with Reason, than to neglect a Duty to which Nature directs even the Brute Creatures by a blind and unthinking Instinct. So that it is such a Duty as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to Nature, and from which nothing can excuse but *disability*, or *sickness*, or the *evident danger* of the *Mother*, or the *interposition* of the *Father's Authority*, or some very *extraordinary* and *publick necessity*.

This I foresee will seem a very *hard Saying* to nice and delicate Mothers, who prefer their own ease and pleasure to the fruit of their own Bodies: But whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think my self obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be so faithful as to tell them that this is a natural Duty; and because it is so, of a more necessary and indispensable obligation than any *positive* Precept of *reveal'd* Religion; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying Sins of this Age

and Nation; and which as much as any Sin whatsoever is evidently a punishment to it self in the palpable ill effects and consequences of it: Which I shall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to represent; that if it be possible, we may in this first Point of Education, so fundamental and necessary to the happiness both of Parents and Children, and consequently to the Publick Good of Human Society, be brought to comply with the unerring Instinct of Nature, and with the plain Dictate of the common Reason of Mankind, and the general practice of all Ages and Nations.

*First*, The neglect of this Duty is a sort of exposing of Children; especially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always exposeth them to manifest inconvenience, and sometimes to great danger; even to that degree as in the consequence of it is but little better than the laying a Child in the Streets, and leaving it to the care and compassion of a Parish. There are *two* very visible inconveniencies which do commonly attend it.

*1st*, Strange Milk, which is often very disagreeable to the Child, and with which the Child to be sure sucks in the natural infirmities of the Nurse, together with a great deal of her natural Inclinations and Irregular Passions, which many times stick by the Child for a long time after: And which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens that some secret Disease of the Nurse is conveyed to the Child.

*2dly*, A shameful and dangerous neglect of the Child, especially by such Nurses as make a Trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great City: Who, after they have made their first and main advantage of the Child, by the excessive, not to say extravagant *vails*, which usually here in *England*, above all other places in the World, are given at *Christenings*: And then by the strait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nursing and keeping of the Child; are often tempted, not to say worse, to a great neglect of the Child; which, if it happen to dye for want of due care, sets the Nurse at liberty to make a new advantage by taking another Child.

Nor can it well be otherwise expected than that a Nurse, who by this course is first made to be unnatural to her own Child, should have no great care and tenderness for a Child which is not her own.

I have heard a very sad Observation made by those who have had the opportunity to know it, that in several of the *Towns* and *Villages* about *London*, where this Trade of nursing Children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of these Children lives out the year: And this surely is a danger which natural affection as well as duty does oblige Parents to take all possible care to prevent.

*Secondly*, This course doth most certainly tend very much to the estranging and weakning of natural affection on both sides; I mean both on the part of the Mother and of the Child. The pains of nursing as well as of bearing Children doth insensibly create a strange tenderness of affection and care in the Mother. *Can a woman*, says God, *forget her sucking Child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Can a Woman?* that is, a *Mother*, not a *Nurse*; for the *sucking child* is said to be *the son of her womb*: God speaks of this as a thing next to impossible. Isa.49.15.

And this likewise is a great endearment of the Mother to the Child: Which endearment, when the Child is put out, is transferr'd from the Mother to the Nurse, and many times continues to be so for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree as if the Nurse were the true Mother, and the true Mother a meer stranger. So that by this means natural affection must be extremely weaken'd; which is great pity, because when it

is kept up in its full ſtrength it often proves one of the beſt ſecurities of the Duty of a Child.

But becauſe this ſevere Doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I muſt take the more care to guard it againſt the *Objections* which will be made to it. Thoſe from *natural diſability*, or *ſickneſs*; from *evident* and apparent *danger* of the *Mother*, or from the *interpoſition* of the *Father's Authority*, or from *plain neceſſity*; or if there be any other that have an equal Reaſon with theſe, I have prevented already by allowing them to be juſt and reaſonable *exceptions* from the general *Rule*, when they are real, and not made *Pretences* to ſhake off our *Duty*.

But there are beſides theſe, *two* Objections which indeed are real, but yet ſeem to have too great a weight with thoſe who would fain decline this Duty, and are by no means ſufficient to excuſe Mothers, no not thoſe of the higheſt Rank and Quality, from the natural obligation of it. And they are theſe. The *manifeſt trouble*, and the *manifold reſtraint* which the careful diſcharge of this Duty does unavoidably bring upon thoſe who ſubmit themſelves to it.

1*ſt*. For the *trouble* of it, I have only this to ſay, and I think that no more need to be ſaid about it; that no body is diſcharged from any Duty by reaſon of the trouble which neceſſarily attends it, and is inſeparable from it; ſince God who made it a Duty foreſaw the trouble of it when he made it ſo.

2*dly*. As to the *manifold reſtraint* which it lays upon Mothers; this will beſt be anſwer'd by conſidering of what nature theſe *reſtraints* are. And they are chiefly in theſe and the like inſtances. This Duty reſtrains Mothers from ſpending their Morning and their Money in curious and coſtly Dreſſing; from miſ-ſpending the reſt of the Day in formal and for the moſt part impertinent Viſits, and in ſeeing and hearing Plays, many of which are neither fit to be ſeen or heard by modeſt Perſons and thoſe who pretend to Religion and Vertue; as I hope all Chriſtians do, eſpecially Perſons of higher Rank and Quality: and it reſtrains them likewiſe from trifling away a great part of the Night in Gaming, and in Revelling till paſt Midnight, I am loth to ſay how much.

Theſe are thoſe terrible *reſtraints* which this natural Duty, of Mothers nurſing their Children, lays upon them. Now I cannot but think all theſe to be very happy *reſtraints*: Happy ſurely for the *Child*; and in many reſpects happy for the *Father*, and for the whole *Family*, which by this means will be kept in much better order: But happieſt of all for the Mother, who does herein not only diſcharge a great and neceſſary Duty, but is hereby alſo hinder'd from running into many great Faults, which before they will be forgiven muſt coſt her a deep Contrition, and a very bitter Repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unuſual Argument, than will pleaſe the preſent Age: But I hope Poſterity will be ſo wiſe as to conſider it and lay it to heart. For I am greatly afraid that the World will never be much better till this great Fault be mended. I proceed to the next *Particular* wherein the good Education of Children doth conſiſt, namely,

II. *In bringing them to be Baptized and admitted Members of Chriſt's Church*, at the times appointed or accuſtomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members. I mean, to bring them to the Church to be there publickly *initiated*, and ſolemnly admitted by *Baptiſm*. And this the Rules of the Church of *England* do ſtrictly enjoyn, unleſs the Child

be

be in danger of death; and in that caſe only it is allowed to adminiſter Baptiſm privately, and in a ſummary way without performing the whole *Office:* But then if the Child live, it is ordered that it ſhall be brought to the Church, where the remainder of the *Office* is to be ſolemnly perform'd.

I know that of late years, ſince our unhappy *Confuſions*, this *Sacrament* hath very frequently been adminiſtred in private: And *Miniſters* have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater miſchief of *Separation*, neceſſitated to comply with the Obſtinacy of the greater and more powerful of their *Pariſhioners*; who for their eaſe, or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous *Chriſtening*, will either have their Children baptized at home by their *Miniſter*, or if ye refuſe, will get ſome other *Miniſter* to do it; which is very irregular.

Now I would intreat ſuch perſons calmly to conſider how contrary to Reaſon, and to the plain deſign of the Inſtitution of this *Sacrament*, this perverſe cuſtom, and their obſtinate reſolution in it, is. For is there any *Civil Society* or *Corporation* into which perſons are admitted without ſome kind of *Solemnity*? and is the *Privilege* of being admitted *Members* of the *Chriſtian Church*, and *Heirs* of the great and glorious *Promiſes* and *Bleſſings* of the *New Covenant* of the *Goſpel* leſs conſiderable and fit to be conferr'd with leſs Solemnity? I ſpeak to *Chriſtians*, and they who are ſo in good earneſt, will without my uſing more words about it, conſider what I ſay in this Particular.

III. Another and very neceſſary Part of the good Education of Children is, *by degrees to inform and carefully to inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their Duty to God, their Neighbour,* and *Themſelves:* That ſo they may be taught how to behave themſelves in all the ſteps of their Life, from their firſt capacity of Reaſon till they arrive at the more perfect uſe and exerciſe of that Faculty; when, if at firſt they be well inſtructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themſelves afterwards.

This Duty God does expreſly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar People, the People of *Iſrael*, ſpeaking of the *Law* which he had given them: *Thou ſhalt*, ſays He, *teach them diligently unto thy Children, and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way; when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up.* And this God long before promiſed, that *Abraham the Father of the faithful*, would do; *I know Abraham*, ſays He, *that he will command his Children and his Houſhold after him to keep the way of the Lord.* Deut. 6. 7. Gen. 18. 19.

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the firſt budding and appearance of Reaſon and Underſtanding in Children. So the *Prophet* directs; *Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? Whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breaſt: For precept muſt be upon precept*, &c. Isa. 28. 9, 10.

To this end we muſt, by ſuch degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themſelves. And in the firſt place we muſt inform them, that there is ſuch a *Being* as *God*, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things. And then, that we are all his Creatures, and the work of his hands, that *it is He that hath made us, and not we our ſelves:* That He continually preſerves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy; and therefore we ought to ask every thing of Him by Prayer, becauſe this is an acknowledgment of our dependance upon Him; and to return *thanks* to Him for all that we have and hope for, becauſe this is a juſt and eaſie Tribute, and all that we can render to Him for his numberleſs favours and benefits.

And after this, they are to be instructed more particularly in their Duty to *God* and *Men*, as I shall shew more fully afterwards. And because *Fear* and *Hope* are the two *Passions* which do chiefly sway and govern Human Nature, and the main Springs and Principles of action; therefore Children are to be carefully inform'd that there is a Life after Death, wherein Men shall receive from God a mighty and eternal Reward, or a terrible and endless Punishment, according as they have done or neglected their Duty in this Life: That God will love and reward those who do his Will and keep his Commandments, but will execute a dreadful punishment upon the workers of Iniquity and the wilful transgressors of his Laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great degeneracy and corruption of Human Nature, deriv'd to us by the *Fall* and wilful transgression of our *first Parents*; and of the way of our *Recovery* out of this miserable state by *Jesus Christ*; whom God hath sent in our Nature to purchase and accomplish the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind, from the Captivity of Sin and *Satan*, and from the Damnation of Hell.

IV. The good Education of Children consists not only in informing their Minds in the knowledge of God and their Duty, but more especially *in endeavouring with the greatest care and prudence to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Virtue.* And this must be done by training them up to the exercise of the following *Graces* and *Virtues.*

*First*, To *Obedience* and *Modesty*; to *Diligence* and *Sincerity*; and to *Tenderness* and *Pity*, as the general *dispositions* to *Religion* and *Virtue.*

*Secondly*, To the good government of their *Passions*, and of their *Tongue*; and particularly to *speak truth*, and to hate *Lying* as a base and vile quality; these being as it were the *foundations* of *Religion* and *Virtue.*

*Thirdly*, To *Piety* and *Devotion* towards *God*; to *Sobriety* and *Chastity* with regard to *themselves*; and to *Justice* and *Charity* towards all Men; as the principal and essential *Parts of Religion* and *Virtue.*

*First*, As the general *dispositions* to *Religion* and *Virtue*, we must train them up,

1*st.* To *Obedience.* Parents must take great care to maintain their Authority over their Children; otherwise they will neither regard their Commands, nor hearken to and follow their Instructions. If they once get head and grow stubborn and disobedient, there is very little hope left of doing any great good upon them.

2*dly*, To *Modesty*, which is a fear of *Shame* and *Disgrace:* This *disposition*, which is proper to Children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purposes. They are *modest*, says *Aristotle*, *who are afraid to offend*, *and they are afraid to offend who are most apt to do it*; as Children are, because they are much under the power of their *Passions*, without a proportionable strength of *Reason* to govern them and keep them under.

Now *Modesty* is not properly a *Virtue*, but it is a very good sign of a tractable and towardly *Disposition*, and a great preservative and security against *Sin* and *Vice*: And those Children, who are much under the restraint of *Modesty*, we look upon as most hopeful and likely to prove good: Whereas *Immodesty* is a vicious temper broke loose and got free from all restraint: So that there is nothing left to keep an *impudent* person from Sin, when fear of *Shame* is gone: For *Sin* will soon take possession of that person whom *Shame* hath left. He that is once become shameless hath prostituted himself. Therefore preserve this *Disposition* in Children, as much

as

as is possible, as one of the best means to preserve their Innocency, and to bring them to Goodness.

3*dly*. To *Diligence*, *sine quâ vir magnus nunquam extitit*, *without which*, says one, *there never was any great and excellent person*. When the *Roman Historians* describe an extraordinary Man, this always enters into his Character as an essential part of it, that he was *incredibili industriâ*, *diligentiâ singulari*, of *incredible industry*, *of singular diligence*; or something to that purpose. And indeed a Person can neither be excellently good, nor extremely bad without this quality. The *Devil* himself could not be so bad and mischievous as he is, if he were not so stirring and restless a Spirit, and did not *compass the Earth* and *go to and fro seeking whom he might devour*.

This is part of the Character of *Sylla*, and *Marius*, and *Cataline*, those great Disturbers of the *Roman* State; as well as of *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, who were much greater and better Men, but yet gave trouble enough to their Country, and at last dissolved the *Roman* Commonwealth, by their Ambition and Contention for Superiority: This, I say, enters into all their Characters, that they were of a vigorous and indefatigable Spirit. So that *Diligence* in it self is neither a *Virtue* nor a *Vice*, but may be applied either way, to good or bad purposes; and yet where all other requisites do concur it is a very proper *Instrument* and *Disposition* for *Virtue*.

Therefore train up Children to *diligence*, if ever you desire they should excel in any kind. *The diligent hand*, saith *Solomon*, *maketh rich*; *Rich* in Prov. 10. 4.
estate, *Rich* in knowledge. *Seest thou a man diligent in his business*, as the Prov. 22.
same *Wise-man* observes, *he shall stand before Princes*, *he shall not stand before* 29.
*mean*, or obscure *men*. And again, *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule*, Prov. 12.
*but the slothful shall be under Tribute*. *Diligence* puts almost every thing into 24.
our power, and will in time make Children capable of the best and greatest things.

Whereas *Idleness* is the bane and ruin of Children; it is the unbending of their Spirits, the *Rust* of their Faculties, and as it were the laying of their Minds *fallow*; not as Husbandmen do their Lands that they may get new heart and strength, but to impair and lose that which they have. Children that are bred up in laziness are almost necessarily bad, because they cannot take the pains to be good; and they cannot take pains, because they have never been inured and accustomed to it; which makes their Spirits *restive*, and when you have occasion to quicken them and spur them up to business they will stand stock still.

Therefore never let your Children be without a *Calling*, or without some useful, or at least innocent employment that will take them up; that they may not be put upon a kind of necessity of being *vicious* for want of something better to do. The *Devil* tempts the active and vigorous into his service, knowing what fit and proper instruments they are to do his drudgery: But the slothful and idle, no body having hired them and set them on work, lie in his way, and he stumbles upon them as *he goes about*; and they do as it were offer themselves to his service, and having nothing to do they even tempt the *Devil* himself to tempt *them*, and to take them in his way.

4*thly*. To *sincerity*; which is not so properly a single Virtue, as the life and soul of all other Graces and Virtues: and without which, what shew of goodness soever a Man may make, he is unsound and rotten at the heart. Cherish therefore this disposition in Children, as that which when they come to be Men will be the great security and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and Men.

 5*thly*. To

*5thly.* To *tenderness* and *pity*: Which, when they come to engage in business and to have dealings in the World, will be a good bar against Injustice and Oppression; and will be continually prompting us to Charity, and will fetch powerful Arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preserve this goodness and tenderness of nature, this so very human, and useful affection, keep Children, as much as is possible, out of the way of *bloody Sights* and *Spectacles* of cruelty; and discountenance in them all cruel and barbarous usage of Creatures under their power: do not allow them to torture and kill them for their sport and pleasure; because this will insensibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them less apt to compassionate the wants of the poor and the sufferings and afflictions of the miserable.

*Secondly,* As the main *Foundations* of Religion and Vertue, Children must be carefully train'd up to the Government of their *Passions*, and of their *Tongues*; and particularly, to *speak truth,* and to hate *lying* as a base and vile quality.

*1st.* To the good Government of their *Passions.* It is the disorder of these, more especially of *Desire*, and *Fear*, and *Anger*, which betrays us to many evils. *Anger* prompts men to *contention* and *murther:* Inordinate *Desire*, to *covetousness* and *fraud* and *oppression :* And *Fear* many times awes men into Sin, and deters them from their Duty.

Now if these *Passions* be cherish'd, or even but let alone in Children, they will in a short time grow headstrong and unruly, and when they come to be men will corrupt the judgment, and turn good nature into humour, and the understanding into prejudice, and wilfulness: But if they be carefully observed and prudently restrained, they may by degrees be managed and brought under government; and the inordinacy of them being prun'd away, they may prove excellent Instruments of Virtue.

Therefore be careful to discountenance in Children any thing that looks like Rage and furious Anger, and to shew them the unreasonableness and deformity of it. Check their longing Desires after things pleasant, and use them to frequent disappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify them they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to submit to the more prudent choice of their Parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you see them at any time apt out of *Fear* to neglect their Duty, or to fall into any Sin, or to be tempted by telling a Lye to commit one fault to hide and excuse another, which Children are very apt to do: The best Remedy of this Evil will be to plant a geater Fear against a less, and to tell them *what* and *whom* they should chiefly *fear*; *not him who can hurt and kill the Body, but Him who after he hath kill'd can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell.*

The neglect of Children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their *Passions*, is the true cause why many that have proved sincere *Christians* when they came to be Men, have yet been very imperfect in their conversation, and their Lives have been full of inequalities and breaches, which have not only been matter of great trouble and disquiet to themselves, but of great scandal to Religion; when their light which should shine before men is so often darken'd and obscured by these frequent and visible infirmities.

*2dly.* To

2*dly*. To the *government of their Tongues*. To this end teach Children *Silence*, especially in the presence of their *Betters*. And assoon as they are capable of such a Lesson, let them be taught not to speak but upon *consideration*, both of *what* they say, and before *whom*. And above all, inculcate upon them that most necessary Duty and Vertue of *speaking truth*, as one of the best and strongest bands of human Society and Commerce: And possess them with the baseness and vileness of telling a Lye; for if it be so great a provocation to *give* a man the *Lye*, then surely to be guilty of that Fault must be a mighty Reproach.

They who write of *Japan* tell us that those People, though mere *Heathens*, take such an effectual course in the Education of their Children as to render a *Lye* and *breach of Faith* above all things odious to them: Insomuch that it is a very rare thing for any Person among them to be taken in a *Lye*, or found guilty of *breach of Faith*. And cannot the Rules of *Christianity* be render'd as effectual to restrain men from these Faults which are scandalous even to *Nature*, and much more so to the *Christian* Religion?

To the Government of the *Tongue* does likewise belong the restraining of Children from *lewd* and *obscene* words, from *vain* and *profane* talk; and especially from horrid *Oaths* and *Imprecations*: From all which they are easily kept at first, but if they are once accustomed to them it will be found no such easy matter for them to get quit of these evil Habits. It will require great attention and watchfulness over themselves, to keep *Oaths* out of their common discourse; but if they be heated and in passion, they throw out *Oaths* and *Curses* as naturally as men that are highly provoked fling stones, or any thing that comes next to hand at one another: So dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in Children to grow up into a *Habit*.

*Thirdly*, As the *principal* and *essential Parts* of Religion and Virtue, let Children be carefully bred up,

1*st*. To *Sobriety* and *Temperance* in regard to themselves; under which I comprehend likewise *Purity* and *Chastity*. The government of the *sensual Appetite* as to all kind of *Bodily* pleasures is not only a great *part* of Religion, but an excellent *instrument* of it, and a necessary *foundation* of *Piety* and *Justice*: For he that cannot govern *himself* is not like to discharge his Duty either to *God* or *Men*. And therefore St. *Paul* puts *Sobriety* first, as a *primary* and *principal* Virtue in which men are instructed by the *Christian* Religion, and which must be laid as the foundation both of *Piety* towards God, and of *Righteousness* to Men. *The Grace of God*, for so he calls the *Gospel*, *that brings Salvation unto all men, hath appeared; teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*. It first teaches us to live *soberly*; and unless we train up Children to this *Vertue* we must never expect that they will either live *righteously* or *godly in this present World*.

Especially, Children must be bred up to great *Sobriety* and *Temperance* in their *Diet*, which will retrench the fewel of other inordinate Appetites. It is a good *Saying* I have met with somewhere, *Magna pars virtutis est bene moratus venter*, *a well manner'd and well govern'd Appetite*, in matter of meats and drinks, *is a great part of Virtue*. I do not mean, that Children should be brought up according to the Rules of a *Lessian* Diet, which sets an equal stint to all Stomachs, and is as senseless a thing as a *Law* would be which should enjoin that *Shooes* for all Mankind should be made upon one and the same *Last*.

2*dly*, To

2*dly*, To a serious and unaffected *Piety* and *Devotion* towards *God*, still and quiet, real and substantial, without much shew and noise; and as free, as may be, from all *tricks* of Superstition, or *freaks* of *Enthusiasm*; which, if *Parents* and *Teachers* be not very prudent, will almost unavoidably insinuate themselves into the Religion of Children; and when they are grown up will make them appear, to wise and sober Persons, phantastical and conceited; and render them very apt to impose their own foolish Superstitions and wild Conceits upon others, who understand Religion much better than themselves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things, to serve him in private, and to attend constantly upon his publick Worship, and to keep their minds intent upon the several parts of it, without wandring and distraction: To *Pray* to God as the Fountain of all Grace and the *giver of every good and perfect gift:* And to acknowledge Him and to render *Thanks* to Him, as our most gracious and constant Benefactor, and the great Patron and Preserver of our Lives: To be careful to do what He commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: To be always under a lively sense and apprehension of his pure and all-seeing Eye, which beholds us in secret: And to do every thing in obedience to the Authority of that Great *Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy*; and with an awful regard to the strict and impartial *Judgment* of the *Great Day*.

3*dly*, To *Justice* and *Honesty:* To defraud and oppress no man; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their Promises and Contracts: and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the Equity of that *Great Rule*, which is so natural, and so easy, that even Children are capable of it; I mean that *Rule* which our *B. Saviour* tells us *is the Law and the Prophets*, namely, that we should do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their Case and Circumstances, and they in ours.

You that are *Parents* and have to do in the World, ought to be just and equal in all your dealings: In the first place for the sake of your own Souls, and next for the sake of your Children: Not only that you may entail no Curse upon the Estate you leave them, but likewise that you may teach them no Injustice by the Example you set before them; which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing; because of the present worldly advantage which it seems to bring, and because *Justice* is in truth a manly Virtue, and least understood by Children; and therefore *Injustice* is a Vice which they will soonest practise and with the least reluctancy, because they have the least knowledge of it in many particular Cases: And because they have so little sense of this great Virtue, they should not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and sport, even when they play for little or nothing: For if they practise it in that Case, and be unjust in a little, they will be much more tempted to be so when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember that *Xenophon* in his *Institution of Cyrus*, which he designed for the *Idea* of a well educated *Prince*, tells us this little but very instructive Story concerning young *Cyrus*: That his *Governor*, the better to make him to understand the nature of *Justice*, puts this Case to him: You see there, says he to *Cyrus*, two Boys playing, of different stature; the lesser of them hath a very long Coat, and the bigger a very short one: Now, says he, if you were a Judge how would you dispose of these two Garments? *Cyrus* immediately, and with very good reason as he thought, passeth this sudden Sentence, That the taller Boy should have the longer Garment, and he that was of lower stature the shorter, because this certainly was fittest for them

both:

both: Upon which his Governor ſharply rebukes him to this purpoſe; telling him, that if he were to make two Coats for them he ſaid well; but he did not put this Caſe to him as a *Tailor* but as a *Judge*, and as ſuch he had given a very wrong Sentence: For a *Judge*, ſays he, ought not to conſider what is *moſt fit*, but what is *juſt*; not who could make the *beſt uſe* of a thing, but who hath the *moſt right* to it.

This I bring partly to ſhew in what familiar ways the principles of Virtue may be inſtill'd into Children; but chiefly to prove that *Juſtice* is a *manly Virtue*, and that there is nothing wherein Children may be more eaſily miſled, than in matter of *Right* and *Wrong*: Therefore Children ſhould be taught the general *Principles* and *Rules* of *Juſtice* and *Righteouſneſs*, becauſe if we would teach them to *do Juſtice* we muſt teach them to *know* what *Juſtice* is. For many are unjuſt merely out of Ignorance and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

*4thly*, To *Charity*; I mean chiefly to the poor and deſtitute; becauſe this, as it is an *eſſential* ſo is it a moſt *ſubſtantial* Part of Religion. Now to encourage this Diſpoſition in Children we muſt not only give them the Example of it, but muſt frequently inculcate upon them ſuch Paſſages of *Scripture* as theſe, That *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and the widows in their affliction*: That *as we ſow* in this kind, *ſo we ſhall reap*: That *he ſhall have judgment without mercy who hath ſhewed no mercy*: That at the *Judgment* of the *Great Day* we ſhall in a very particular manner be call'd to an account for the practice or omiſſion of this Duty, and ſhall then be abſolved or condemned according as we have exerciſed or neglected this great Virtue of the Chriſtian Religion.

# SERMON LII.

## OF THE

## *EDUCATION of CHILDREN.*

PROV. XXII. 6.

*Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

V. THE good Education of Children consists *in giving them good Example.* This course *David* took in his *Family*, as appears by that solemn Resolution of his, *I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way, I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Let *Parents* and *Masters of Families* give good Example to their *Children* and *Servants*, in a constant serving of God in their Families, which will nourish Religion in those that are under their care: And let them also be Exemplary in a sober and holy Conversation before those that belong to them.

Psal. 101. 2.

And let not your Children, as far as is possible, have any bad Examples to converse with, either among your Servants, or their own Companions; lest *by walking with them they learn their way and get a blot to their Souls*, There is a contagion in Example, and nothing doth more slily insinuate it self and gain upon us than a living and familiar Pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let Children always have good Examples before them.

Especially, let Parents themselves be exemplary to them in the best things, because their Example is of all other the most powerful, and carries greatest Authority with it. And without this, Instruction will signifie very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be lost. We shall find it very hard to persuade our Children to do that which they see we do not practise our selves. For even Children have so much sense and sagacity as to understand that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a Man doth truly and inwardly believe. Example is the most lively way of teaching, and because Children are much given to imitation, it is likewise a very delightful way of instruction, and that of which Children are most capable; both because it is best understood, and is apt to make the deepest impression upon them.

So that Parents, above all others, have one Argument to be Religious and good themselves, for the sake of their Children. If you desire to have them good, the best way to make them so is to give them the Example of it in being good your selves. For this reason Parents should take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your Children will follow

you

you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil Example of Parents is both a temptation and encouragement to Children to Sin, becauſe it is a kind of Authority for what they do, and looks like a juſtification of their wickedneſs.

With what reaſon canſt thou expect that thy Children ſhould follow thy good Inſtructions, when thou thy ſelf giveſt them an ill Example? Thou doſt but as it were becken to them with thy head and ſhew them the way to Heaven by thy good Counſel, but thou takeſt them by the hand and leadeſt them in the way to Hell by thy contrary Example. When ever you ſwear, or tell a lye, or are paſſionate and furious, or come drunk into your Family, you weaken the Authority of your Commands, and loſe all reverence and obedience to them by contradicting your own Precepts.

The Precepts of a good Man are apt to raiſe and inflame others to the imitation of them, but when they come from one who is faulty and vicious in that kind himſelf they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exerciſe of thoſe Virtues which we plainly ſee they do not practiſe themſelves. It is the *Apoſtle's* Argument, *Thou therefore that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thy ſelf?* Thou that teacheſt thy Children to ſpeak truth, doſt thou tell a lye? Thou that ſayeſt they muſt not ſwear, doſt thou profane the Name of God by cuſtomary Oaths and Curſes? Thou art unfit to be *a guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkneſs, an inſtructer of the fooliſh, and a teacher of Babes, becauſe thou thy ſelf haſt only a form of Knowledge and of Truth in the Law,* but art deſtitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good Example to your Children you defeat your own Counſels and undermine the beſt Inſtructions you can give them; and they will all be ſpilt like Water upon the barren Sands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good Education conſiſts *in wiſe and early Reſtraints from that which is evil, by ſeaſonable Reproof and Correction.* And this alſo is one way of Inſtruction: So *Solomon* tells us, *The Rod and Reproof giveth wiſdom:* And though both theſe do ſuppoſe a Fault that is paſt, yet the great end of them is to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore whatever will probably be effectual for future Caution and Amendment, ought to be ſufficient in this kind, becauſe the End is always to give meaſure to the Means: And where a mild and gentle Rebuke will do the buſineſs, Reproof may ſtop there without proceeding further; Or when that will not do, if a ſharp word and a ſevere admonition will be effectual, the Rod may be ſpared. Prov. 29. 15.

Provided always, that our *Lenity* give no encouragement to Sin, and be ſo managed that Children may perceive that you are in good earneſt, and reſolved that if they will not reform they ſhall certainly be puniſh'd. And provided likewiſe, that your *Lenity* bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the Fault. We muſt not uſe mildneſs in the caſe of a wilful and heinous Sin, eſpecially if it be exemplary and of publick influence. To rebuke gently upon ſuch an Occaſion is rather to countenance the Fault, and ſeems to argue that we are not ſenſible enough of the Enormity of it, and that we have not a due diſlike and deteſtation for it: Such cold Reproofs as thoſe which old *Eli,* gave his Sons, *Why do you ſuch things? For I hear of your evil dealing by all this People;* that is, their carriage was ſuch as gave publick Scandal: *Nay, my Sons; for it is not a good Report that I hear, you make the Lord's People to tranſgreſs.* 1 Sam. 2. 23, 24.

Such a cold Reproof as this, where the Crime was so great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their Sin; and so God interprets it, and therefore calls it *a kicking at his Sacrifice, and a*
Cha. 2. 19. *despising of his Offering.* And he threatens *Eli* with most terrible Judgments upon this very account, *because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

So that our Severity must be proportioned to the Crime. Where the Fault is great, there greater Severity must be used; so much at least as may be an effectual Restraint for the future. Here was *Eli*'s miscarriage, that in the case of so great a Fault as his Sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the Crime, nor to the End of Reproof and Correction, which is Amendment for the future: But he used such a mildness in his Reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage than restrain them in their vile courses: For so the *Text* says, that *his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

There are indeed some Dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentle Reproof will suffice. But most Children are of that temper that Correction must be sometimes used; and a fond Indulgence in this Case is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and in truth not Love but Hatred. So
Prov. 13. 24. the *Wise-man* tells us, *He that spareth the Rod hateth his Son, but he that*
ch. 19. 18. *loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Chasten thy Son while there is hope, and*
ch. 22. 15. *let not thy Soul Spare for his Crying.* And again, *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a Child, and the Rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*
chap. 23. 13, 14. *With-hold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the Rod he shall not dye: Thou shalt beat him with the Rod, and shalt deliver his Soul*
ch. 29. 15. *from Hell.* Again, *The Rod and Reproof giveth wisdom, but a Child left to himself bringeth his Mother to shame:* He mentions the *Mother* emphatically, because She many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon her.

So that Correction is of great use, and often necessary; and Parents that forbear it are not only cruel to their Children, but to Themselves: For God many times punisheth those Parents very severely who have neglected this necessary piece of Discipline. There is hardly to be found in the whole *Bible* a more terrible temporal Threatning than that concerning *Eli* and his House, for his fond indulgence to his *Sons*, who when they came to be Men, proved such horrible Scandals not only to their *Father*, but to the *Priest*'s Office; and to that degree as to *make the Sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the People.* I will recite the *Threatning* at large, for an
1 Sam. 3. 11, 12, 13, 14. Admonition to *Parents* that they be not guilty in this kind; *The Lord said to Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle: In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his House; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his House for ever for the Iniquity which he knoweth, because his Sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not: And therefore I have sworn unto the House of Eli, that the Iniquity of Eli's House shall not be purged with Sacrifice nor Offering for ever.* I know very well that this enormous wickedness of *Eli*'s Sons was committed by them after they were grown to be Men, but this Instance is nevertheless to my present purpose, there being hardly any doubt to be made but that it was the natural effect of a remiss and too indulgent an Education.

Yea very often God doth correct and remarkably punish fond Parents by those very Children who have wanted Reproof and Correction: Of which

which the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable Instance in *Adonijah*, upon the mention of whose Rebellion against *David* his Father the *Text* takes particular notice of his Father's extreme fondness of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cause of it: *For his Father had not displeased him at any time in saying why hast thou done so?* And on the contrary, the wise Son of *Sirach* tells us, that *he that chastiseth his Son shall have joy of him.*

VII. The next thing I shall mention as a part of good Education is, *the bringing of Children to be publickly Catechised by the Minister to prepare them for solemn Confirmation.*

It was with a particular respect to this work of *publick Catechising*, and by way of Introduction to it, that I at first proposed to treat thus largely of the *good Education of Children*, hoping it might be of good use to handle this *Subject* more fully than it hath usually been done, at least to my knowledge, from the Pulpit.

And therefore I shall say something, and that very briefly concerning the *nature*, and concerning the *necessity* and great usefulness of *Catechising* Children.

*First*, For the *nature* of it, it is a particular way of teaching by *Question* and *Answer*, accommodated and fitted for the Instruction of Children in the Principles of Religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where enjoined in *Scripture*; but *Instruction* in general is: And I doubt not but that upon this general warrant *Parents* and *Ministers* may use that way of Instruction of Children which is most fit and proper to instill into them the Principles of Religion. It is true, that the word κατηχεῖν, from whence our word *Catechism* doth come, is used in *Scripture* to signifie *teaching* in general: But it hath since by *Ecclesiastical* Writers been appropriated to that particular way of Instruction which hath been long in use in the *Christian* Church, and is commonly called *Catechising*.

*Secondly*, As to the *necessity* and great *usefulness* of it; *Catechising* hath a particular advantage as to Children: Because they are subject to forgetfulness, and want of attention. Now *Catechising* is a good Remedy against both these; because by *Questions* put to them Children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and must give some *Answer* to the Question that is ask'd: And a *Catechism* being short, and containing in a little compass the most necessary Principles of Religion, it is the more easily remembred.

The great *usefulness* and indeed the *necessity* of it plainly appears by experience. For it very seldom happens, that Children which have not been catechised have any clear and competent knowledge of the Principles of Religion; and for want of this are incapable of receiving any great benefit by *Sermons*, which suppose persons to be in some measure instructed beforehand in the main Principles of Religion.

Besides, that if they have no Principles of Religion fix'd in them, they become an easie Prey to Seducers. And we have had sad experience of this in our Age; and among many other dismal effects of our late Civil Confusions this is none of the least, that *publick Catechising* was almost wholly disused, and *private* too in most Families: For had *Chatechising* of Children been continued, it is very probable that this Age would have been infested with fewer *Errors* and with fewer *Schisms*; and that there would not have been so much *Apostasie* from the *Fundamentals* of Religion. For it is, I think, a true *Observation*, that *Catechising*, and the *History* of the *Martyrs* have been the *two* great *Pillars* of the *Protestant* Religion.

 There

There being then so great a *necessity* and usefulness of this Way of Instruction. I would earnestly recommend the practice of it to *Parents* and *Masters of Families* with respect to their *Children* and *Servants*. For I do not think that this Work should lie wholly upon *Ministers*. You must do your part, at home, who by your constant residence in your Families have better and more easy opportunities of inculcating the Principles of Religion upon your *Children* and *Servants*. There you must prepare them for *publick Chatechising*, that the Work of the *Minister* may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns *Ministers*, I intend by God's assistance, so soon as the business can be put into a good method, to begin this *Exercise*. And I do earnestly intreat all that have *young Children* and *Servants*, to bring such of them as are fit to be publickly Catechised and instructed in the Principles of Religion: And I shall as often as shall be thought expedient spend some time in this Work, between *afternoon Prayers* and *Sermon*.

The *Catechism* to be used shall be that appointed in our *Liturgy*, which is short, and contains in it the *chief Principles* of the *Christian Religion*. And I shall make a short and plain explication of the Heads of it, suitable to the capacity of Children. And because this may not probably be of so great advantage to those who are of riper Years and Understandings, yet because Children are to be instructed as well as Men, I must intreat those who are like to carry away the least *profit* to bring with them the more *patience:* Especially since I shall for their sakes, in the constant course of my *Afternoon Sermons*, more largely and fully explain the *chief Principles* of the *Christian Belief:* A Work which you know I have some time ago entred upon.

VIII. The *last* thing I shall mention, and with which the State of *Childhood* ends, is *the bringing of Children to the Bishop, to be solemnly confirm'd*, by their taking upon themselves the *Vow* which by their *Sureties* they entred in to at their *Baptism*.

This is acknowledged by almost all *Sects* and *Parties* of *Christians* to be of *Primitive* Antiquity, and of very great *use* when it is performed with that due preparation of persons for it, by the *Ministers* to whose charge they belong, and with that seriousness and solemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very desirable that *Confirmations* should be more frequent, and in smaller Numbers at a time; that so the *Bishop* may apply himself more particularly to every Person that is to be *Confirmed*, that by this means the thing may make the deeper impression and lay the stronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wish, both to prevent confusion, and for the ease also of the *Bishop* that his work may not be endless, that *Ministers* would take care that none may present themselves to the Bishop or to be presented by the *Ministers*, to be *Confirmed* a second time: Because a great many are wont to offer themselves every time there is a *Confirmation*, which is both very disorderly and unreasonable, there being every whit as little reason for a *second Confirmation*, as there is for a *second Baptism:* And if any persons need so often to be *Confirmed*, it is a sign that Confirmation hath very little effect upon them.

II. I proceed to the *Second* general *Head*, which was *to give some more particular Directions for the management of this Work of the good Education of Children in such a way as may be most effectual to its End.*

*First*, En-

*First*, Endeavour, as well as you can, to discover the particular *temper* and *disposition* of Children, that you may suit and apply your selves to it, and by striking in with Nature may steer and govern them in the sweetest and easiest way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which Husbandmen are wont very carefully to enquire into, that they may apply the *Seed* to the *Soil*, and plant in it that which is most proper for it:

*Quid quæq; ferat regio, quid quæq; recuset.*
*Hic segetes, illic veniunt fælicius uvæ.*

Every *Soil* is not proper for all sorts of *Grain* or *Fruit*; one ground is fit for *Corn*, another for *Vines*: And so is it in the *tempers* and *dispositions* of *Children*: Some are more capable of one *Excellency* and *Virtue* than another, and some more strongly inclined to one *Vice* than another: Which is a great *Secret* of *Nature* and *Providence*, and it is very hard to give a just and satisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular Tempers of Children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them and manage them to the best advantage: That where we discern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may cast in such Seeds and Principles, as, by their suitableness to their particular Tempers, we judge most likely to take soonest and deepest root: And when these are grown up, and have taken possession of the Soil, they will prepare it for the Seeds of other Virtues.

And so likewise when we discover in their Nature a more particular disposition and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we must with great diligence and care apply such Instructions and plant such Principles in them, as may be most effectual, to alter this evil disposition of their Minds; that whilst Nature is tender and flexible we may gently bend it the other way: And it is almost incredible what strange things by Prudence and Patience may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverse and crooked Disposition.

So that it is of very great use to observe and discover the particular Tempers of Children, that in all our instruction and management of them, we may apply our selves to their Nature and hit their peculiar Disposition: By this means we may lead and draw them to their Duty in human ways, and such as are much more agreeable to their Temper than constraint and necessity, which are harsh and churlish, and against the grain. Whatever is done with delight goes on cheerfully, but when Nature is compell'd and forc'd, things proceed heavily: Therefore, when we are forming and fashioning Children to Religion and Virtue, we should make all the advantage we can of their particular Tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct Nature in the way it will most easily go. Every Temper gives some particular advantage and *handle* whereby we may take hold of them and steer them more easily: But if we take a contrary course we must expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctancy.

Such ways of Education as are prudently fitted to the particular dispositions of Children are like *Wind* and *Tide* together, which will make the Work go on amain: But those ways and methods which are applied cross to Nature are like *Wind* against *Tide*, which make a great stir and conflict, but a very slow progress. Not that I do, or can expect that all *Parents* should be *Philosophers*, but that they should use the best wisdom they have in a matter of so great concernment.

*Secondly*, In

*Secondly*, In your instruction of Children endeavour to plant in them those *Principles* of Religion and Virtue which are most substantial, and are like to have the best influence upon the future government of their Lives, and to be of continual and lasting use to them. Look to the *Seed* you sow, that it be sound and good, and for the benefit and use of Mankind: *This* is to be regarded, as well as the *Ground* into which the *Seed* is cast.

Labour to beget in Children a right apprehension of those things which are most fundamental and necessary to the knowledge of God and our Duty; and to make them sensible of the great evil and danger of Sin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next Life and of the eternal Rewards and Recompences of it. And if these *Principles* once take root they will spread far and wide, and have a vast influence upon all their actions, and unless some powerful Lust, or temptation to Vice hurry them away, they will probably accompany them and stick by them as long as they live.

Many Parents, according to their best knowledge and apprehensions of Religion in which they themselves have been educated, and too often according to their Zeal without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill-grounded Opinions in the Minds of their Children, and to fashion them to a *Party*, by infusing into them the particular Notions and Phrases of a *Sect*, which when they come to be examined have no substance, nor perhaps sense in them: And by this means, instead of bringing them up in the true and solid Principles of Christianity, they take a great deal of pains to instruct them in some doubtful Doctrines of no great moment in Religion, and perhaps false at the bottom; whereby instead of teaching them to hate Sin they fix them in Schism, and teach them to hate and damn all those who differ from them and are opposite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better *Christians* than themselves.

And indeed nothing is more common and more to be pitied, than to see with what a confident contempt and scornful pity some ill-instructed and ignorant people will lament the blindness and ignorance of those who have a thousand times more true knowledge and skill than themselves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice as well as knowledge of the Christian Religion; believing those who do not relish their affected Phrases and uncouth Forms of speech to be ignorant of the *Mystery* of the *Gospel*, and utter strangers to the Life and Power of Godliness.

But now what is the effect of this mistaken way of Education? The *Harvest* is just answerable to the *Husbandry*,

*Infœlix lolium & steriles dominantur avenæ*;

As they have sown, so they must expect to reap; and instead of good Grain to have Cockle and Tares: *They have sown the Wind, and they shall reap the Whirlwind*; as the expression is in the *Prophet*; instead of true Religion, and of a sober and peaceable Conversation, there will come up new and wild Opinions, a factious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal, which will neither suffer themselves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you desire to reap the effects of true Piety and Religion, you must take care to plant in Children the main and substantial Principles of *Christianity*, which may give them a general *byass* to holiness and goodness, and not to little particular Opinions, which being once fix'd in them by the strong prejudice of Education will hardly ever be rooted out.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, Do all that in you lies to check and discourage in them the first beginnings of Sin and Vice: So soon as ever they appear pluck them up by the Roots. This is like the weeding of Corn, which is a necessary piece of good Husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the Soil it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: But if we watch them and cut them up as soon as they appear, this will discourage the Root and make it dye.

Therefore take great heed that your Children be not habituated and accustomed to any evil course. A Vice that is of any considerable growth and continuance will soon grow obstinate, and having once spread its roots it will be a very difficult matter to clear the Ground of it. A Child may be so long neglected till he be overgrown with Vice to that degree, that it may be out of the power of Parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved disposition of Children it will be one of the hardest things in the World to give a stop to it. It is the *Apostle's* caution to *take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulness of Sin*, which they who go on in an evil course will most certainly be. We should observe the first appearances of evil in Children, and kill those young Serpents assoon as they stir lest they bite them to death.

*Fourthly*, Bring them, as soon as they are capable of it, to the *publick Worship* of God, where He hath promised his more especial presence and blessing. It is in *Zion*, the place of God's publick Worship, where *the Lord hath commanded the blessing even Life for evermore: There* are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of Grace in us: This is the *Pool* where the *Angel* useth to come and to *move the Waters:* Bring your Children hither, where if they diligently attend they may meet with an Opportunity of being *healed*.

And when they come from the *Church*, call them frequently to an account of what they have heard and learn'd there: This will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their Memories with greater care, and will fix it there so as to make a deeper and more lasting impression upon their Minds.

*Fifthly*, Be careful more especially to put them upon the exercise and practice of Religion and Virtue, in such Instances as their Understanding and age are capable of. Teach them some short and proper *Forms* of *Prayer* to God, to be said by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at least every Morning and Evening. A great many Children neglect this, not from any ill disposition of Mind, but because no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and custom of any thing will after a little while make that easie and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctancy.

*Knowledg* and *Practice* do mutually promote and help forward one another. *Knowledge* prepares and disposeth for *Practice*, and *Practice* is the best way to perfect *Knowledge* in any kind. Mere *Speculation* is a very raw and rude thing in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by *Practice* and *Experience*. The most exact skill in *Geography* is nothing compar'd with the knowledge of that Man, who besides the Speculative part hath travell'd over and carefully view'd the Countries he hath read of. The most knowing Man in the Art and Rules of *Navigation* is no body in comparison of an experienced *Pilot* and *Seaman*. Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere Speculation as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For Men

may

may easily mistake Rules, but frequent Practice and Experience are seldom deceived. Give me a Man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfie me that he knows how to do it. That *Saying* of our *B. Saviour*, *If any Man will do my will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self,* is a clear determination of this matter, namely, That they understand the Will of God best who are most careful to do it. And so likewise the best way to know what God is, is to transcribe his Perfections in our Lives and Actions; to be *holy*, and *just*, and *good*, and *merciful* as He is.

Therefore when the Minds of Children are once throughly possest with the true Principles of Religion, we should bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know: Let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to avoid what is evil, in all its shapes and appearances, and to practise their Duty in the several Instances of it, than
Job 28.28. to *speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels: Unto Man He said, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*
1 Joh.2.2, *Hereby*, saith St. *John*, *we know that we know him, if we keep his Command-*
3, 4. *ments: He that saith I know him and keepeth not his Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

*Xenophon* tells us, that the *Persians* instead of making their Children *learned*, taught them to be *virtuous*; and instead of filling their heads with *fine Speculations*, taught them *honesty*, and *sincerity*, and *resolution*; and endeavoured to make them *wise* and *valiant*, *just* and *temperate*. *Lycurgus* also in the institution of the *Lacedemonian* Commonwealth took no care about Learning, but only about the Lives and Manners of their Children: Though I should think that the care of both is best, and that Learning would very much help to form the Manners of Children, and to make them both wiser and better Men: And therefore, with the leave of so great and wise a *Lawgiver*, I cannot but think that this was a defect in his *Institution:* Because Learning, if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness is not only an ornament but a great advantage to the better Government of any Kingdom or Commonwealth.

*Sixthly*, There must be great care and diligence used in this whole business of *Education*, and more particularly in the *Instruction* of Children. There must be *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there*
Isa.28.10. *a little*, as the *Prophet* expresseth it. The Principles of Religion and Virtue must be instill'd and dropt into them by such degrees and in such a measure as they are capable of receiving them: For Children are narrow-mouth'd Vessels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they must also be accustomed to the practice and exercise of Religion and goodness by degrees, till Holiness and Virtue hath taken root, and they be well settled and confirm'd in a good course. Now this requires constant attendance and even the patience of the Husbandman to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In some Children the Seeds that are sown fall into a greater depth of earth and therefore are of a slow disclosure, and it may be a considerable time before they appear above-ground; it is long before they shoot and grow up to any height, and yet they may afterwards be very conside-
Sir H.W. rable: *Which*, as an ingenious *Author* observes, *should excite the care and prevent the despair of Parents:* For if their *Children be not such speedy Spreaders and Branchers as the Vine, they may perhaps prove*

*——proles tardè crescentis Olivæ.*

It

It is a work of great pains and difficulty to rectifie a perverse Disposition. It is more easie to *palliate* the corruption of Nature, but the *cure* of it requires time and careful looking to: An evil temper and inclination may be cover'd and conceal'd, but it is a great work to conquer and subdue it. It must first be check'd and stopp'd in its course, and then weaken'd and the force of it be broken by degrees, and at last, if it be possible, destroyed and rooted out.

*Seventhly* and *Lastly*, To all these means we must add our constant and earnest Prayers to God for our Children, that his Grace may take an early possession of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations and towardly dispositions for goodness: And that he would be pleased to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful Assistance and Blessing; without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. *Parents* may *plant*, and *Ministers* may *water*, but it is *God that must give the increase.*

Be often then upon your knees for your Children. Do not only teach them to pray for themselves, but do you likewise with great fervour and earnestness *commend them to God and to the power of his Grace* which alone is able to sanctifie them. Apply your selves to *the Father of lights*; *from whom comes every good and perfect gift:* Beg his *H. Spirit*, and ask Divine knowledge and wisdom for them of Him, *who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth no man:* Beseech Him to season their tender years with his *Fear*, which *is the beginning of Wisdom:* Pray for them as *Abraham* did for *Ishmael*, *Oh that Ishmael may live in thy sight.*

Many Parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themselves to *Prayer*, earnest and importunate Prayer to God, as their last Refuge. *Monica*, the Mother of St. *Austin*, by the constancy and importunity of her Prayers, obtained of God the conversion of her Son, who proved afterwards so great and glorious an Instrument of good to the Church of God: According to what St. *Ambrose Bishop* of *Milain*, to encourage her to persevere in her fervent Prayers for her *Son*, had said to her, *Fieri non potest ut filius tot lachrymarum pereat*, *It cannot be*, says he, *that a Son of so many* Prayers and *Tears should miscarry.* God's Grace is free, but it is not likely but that God will at last give in this Blessing to our earnest Prayers and faithful Endeavours.

Therefore pray for them *without ceasing*, *pray and faint not.* Great importunity in Prayer seldom fails of a gracious answer: Our *B. Saviour* spake two *Parables* on purpose to encourage us herein: Not because God is moved, much less because he is tired out with our importunity; but because it is an Argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great Goodness: And *to them that believe all things are possible*, says our *B. Lord*, *To whom*, &c.

# SERMON LIII.

## OF THE

## *EDUCATION of CHILDREN.*

### PROV. XXII. 6.

*Train up a Child in the way he fhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

I Proceed to the next general Head which I propofed, namely,

III. *To difcover fome of the more remarkable and common Mifcarriages in the management of this Work.* I do not hereby mean *grofs neglects* for want of *care*, but *miftakes* and *mifcarriages* for want of *prudence* and *skill*, even when there is no want of care and diligence in *Parents* and *Inftructors.* And I fhall for Method's fake reduce the more confiderable and common *Mifcarriages* to thefe *three Heads.*

*Firft*, In matter of *Inftruction.*
*Secondly*, In matter of *Example.*
*Thirdly*, In matter of *Reproof* and *Correction.*

I. In matter of *Inftruction.* Parents do very often mainly mifcarry in not teaching their Children the true *difference* between *Good* and *Evil*, and the *degrees* of them: As when we teach them any thing is a Sin that really is not, or that any thing is not a Sin which in truth is fo: Or when we teach them to lay more ftrefs and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only *convenient* to be in the higheft degree *neceffary*, or that which it may be is only *inconvenient*, or may be an occafion of *Scandal* to fome weak Chriftians, to be a Sin *in its own Nature damnable.*

Parents do likewife lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to inftruct them in leffer things, and as ftrict in enjoining them, and as fevere in punifhing the commiffion or neglect of them, according as they efteem them *good* or *evil*, as if they were *the weightier things of the Law* and matters of the greateft moment in Religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning Parents that have with great feverity reftrained their Children in the wearing of their Hair: Nay, I can remember fince the wearing of it below their Ears was looked upon as a Sin of the firft magnitude; and when *Minifters* generally, whatever their *Text* was, did in every *Sermon* either find or make an occafion with great feverity to reprove the great Sin of *long hair*; and if they faw

any one in the *Congregation* guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewise known some Parents that have strictly forbidden their Children the use of some sorts of *Recreations* and *Games* under the notion of heinous Sins, upon a mistake, that because there was in them a mixture of *Fortune* and *Skill* they were therefore unlawful; a Reason which I think hath no weight and force in it, though I do not deny but human Laws may for very prudent reasons either restrain or forbid the use of these *Games*, because of the boundless expence both of *Money* and *Time* which is many times occasioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps, the same Persons, that would not only allow but even encourage their Children to despise the very *Service of God* under some *Forms*, which according to their several apprehensions they esteemed to be *Superstitious* or *Factious*. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of most dangerous consequence, and have often observed it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all Religion.

And how many Parents teach their Children *doubtful Opinions*, and lay great stress upon them as if they were *saving* or *damning* Points; and hereby set such an edge and keenness upon them for or against some indifferent modes and *circumstances* of God's Worship as if the very *Being* of a *Church* and the *Essence* of *Religion* were concern'd in them?

These certaily are great *Mistakes*, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of so wide and vast a difference as *good* and *evil*, *lawful* and *unlawful*, *indifferent* and *necessary*. For when Children come to be Men, and to have a freer and larger view of the World, and shall find by the contrary practice of very wise and serious Persons, that they have quite different apprehensions of these matters, and do not think that to be a *Sin* which their Parents have so strictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times punished them more severely for the doing of it than if they had told a *Lye*, this may make them apt to question whether any thing be a Sin: And the violence which they offer to their Consciences, and the *strein* that they give them upon such an occasion, by complying with the general practice of others contrary to the Princples of their Education, doth many times open a gap for great and real Sins.

Besides, that Children which are bred up in high Prejudices *for* or *against* indifferent *Opinions* or *Practices* in Religion, do usually when they are grown up prove to be Men of narrow and contracted Spirits, peevish, and froward, and uncharitable, and many times great *Bigots* and *Zealots* either in the way of *Superstition* or *Faction*, according to the *Principles* which have been instill'd into them to *byass* them either way: And very hardly do they ever quit themselves so clearly of their Prejudices, as to become wise and peaceable and substantial Christians.

In short, if we carefully observe it, we shall find that when Children have been thus indiscreetly educated, their Religion differs as much from that of sober and judicious Christians, as the *Civil* behaviour and conversation of those who have been unskilfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themselves, does from the behaviour of those who have had a more free and generous Education.

II. In matter of *Example*. There are many Parents whose Lives are Exemplary in the main, who yet seem to use too great a freedom before their Children. It is an old Rule, and I think a very good one,

*Maxima debetur pueris reverentia,*

*There is a very great reverence due to Children.* There are many things which are not Sins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all perſons. There are ſome words and actions ſo trivial and light, that they are not fit to be ſaid or done before thoſe for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of Converſation which is only proper among Equals in Age and Quality, which if we uſe before our Superiors and Betters, we ſeem to contemn *them*; if before our Inferiors, *they* will go nigh to contemn us.

It ought to be conſider'd, that Children do not underſtand the exact limits of *good* and *evil*, ſo that if in our words or actions we go to the utmoſt bounds of that which is lawful, we ſhall be in danger of ſhewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not want to be careful of their ſteps, and therefore we will not venture them to play about a Precipice, or near a dangerous Place, where yet Men that will take care may go ſafely enough. And therefore Parents ſhould be very careful to keep their Children from the Confines of Evil, and at as great a diſtance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions ſhould ever be temper'd with gravity and circumſpection, that Children may not ſee or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to Sin, or carry them to the Borders of Vice; leſt they ſhould not ſtop juſt there, but take a ſtep further than you intended they ſhould go.

III. In matter of *Reproof* and *Correction*; many Religious and careful Parents are guilty of *two* great Miſcarriages in this part of Education.

*Firſt*, Of too much *rigor* and *ſeverity*; which, eſpecially with ſome ſort of Tempers, hath very ill ſucceſs. The firſt experiment that ſhould be made upon Children ſhould be to allure them to their Duty, and by reaſonable inducements to gain them to the love of Goodneſs; by *Praiſe* and *Reward*, and ſometimes by *Shame* and *Diſgrace:* And if this will do, there will be no occaſion to proceed to Severity; eſpecially not to great Severities, which are very unſuitable to Human Nature. A mixture of prudent and ſeaſonable *Reproof* or *Correction* when there is occaſion for it, may do very well; but *Whips* are not *the Cords of a Man:* Human Nature may be *driven* by them, but it muſt be *led* by ſweeter and gentler ways.

*Speuſippus* cauſed the Pictures of *Joy* and *Gladneſs* to be ſet round about his *School*, to ſignifie that the buſineſs of Education ought to be rendered as pleaſant as may be: And indeed Children ſtand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to Learning and Goodneſs. *Metus haud diuturni Magiſter officii*, ſays *Tully*; *Fear* alone *will not teach a Man his Duty* and hold him to it *for any long time:* For when *that* is removed, Nature will break looſe and do like it ſelf: Beſides, that frequent *Corrections* make Puniſhments to loſe their Awe and Force, and are apt to ſpoil the Diſpoſition of Children and to harden them againſt Shame; and after a while they will deſpiſe *Correction*, when they find they can endure it.

Great Severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended: And many times thoſe who were bred up in a very ſevere *School*, hate Learning ever after for the ſake of the cruelty that was uſed to force it upon them: And ſo likewiſe an endeavour to bring Children to Piety and Goodneſs by unreaſonable ſtrictneſs and rigor does often beget in them a laſting diſguſt and Prejudice againſt Religion, and teacheth them, as *Eraſmus*

ſays,

ſays, *virtutem ſimul odiſſe & nôſſe, to hate Virtue at the ſame time that they teach them to know it:* For by this means Virtue is repreſented to the minds of Children under a great diſadvantage, and *good* and *evil* are brought too near together: So that whenever they think of Religion and Virtue, they remember the Severity which was wont to accompany the Inſtructions about it; and the natural hatred which Men have for Puniſhment is by this means derived upon Religion it ſelf And indeed how can it be expected that Children ſhould love their Duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of *Rods* ſhak'd over them?

I inſiſt upon this the more, becauſe I do not remember to have obſerved more notorious Inſtances of great miſcarriage, than in the Children of very ſtrict and ſevere Parents. Of which I can give no other account but this, that Nature when it is thus overcharged recoils the more terribly: It hath ſomething in it like the *Spring* of an Engine, which being forcibly preſs'd does upon the firſt liberty return back with ſo much the greater violence: In like manner the vicious diſpoſitions of Children, when reſtrain'd meerly by the ſeverity of Parents, do break forth ſtrangely aſſoon as ever they get looſe and from under their Diſcipline.

*Secondly*, Another Miſcarriage in this matter is, when Reproof and Correction are accompanied and managed with Paſſion. This is to betray one Fault, and perhaps a greater in the puniſhment of another. Beſides, that this makes Reproof and Correction to look like Revenge and Hatred, which uſually does not perſuade and reform but provoke and exaſperate. And this probably may be one reaſon of the *Apoſtle*'s admonition, *Parents provoke not your Children unto wrath*, becauſe *that* is never likely to have any good effect. *Correction* is a kind of *Phyſick*, which ought never to be adminiſtred in Paſſion, but upon counſel and good advice.

And that Paſſion is incident to Parents upon this occaſion, the *Apoſtle* tells us when he ſays, that *the Parents of our fleſh chaſten us for their plea-* Heb. 10
*ſure*; that is, they do it many times to gratifie their Paſſion; *but God* cha- 12.
ſtens us *for our profit*, not in Anger but with a deſign to do us good; And can we have a better Pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate?

A *Father* is as it were a *Prince* and a *Judge* in his *Family:* There he gives Laws, and inflicts Cenſures and Puniſhments upon Offenders. But how miſ-becoming a thing would it be to ſee a Judge paſs Sentence upon a Man in Choler? It is the ſame thing to ſee a Father in the heat and fury of his Paſſion correct his Child. If a Father could but ſee himſelf in this *Mood*, and how ill his Paſſion becomes him, inſtead of being angry with his Child he would be out of Patience with himſelf. I proceed to the next thing I propoſed, namely,

IV. To make out the truth of the *Propoſition* contained in the *Text*, by ſhewing how *the good Education of Children comes to be of ſo great advantage and to have ſo good and laſting an influence upon their whole Lives.*

I confeſs there are ſome wild and ſavage Natures, monſtrous and prodigious Tempers, hard as the Rocks, and barren as the Sand upon the Sea-ſhore; which diſcover ſtrong and early propenſions to vice, and a violent antipathy to Goodneſs. Such Tempers are next to deſperate, but yet they are not utterly intractable to the Grace of God and the Religious Care of Parents.

I hope ſuch Tempers as theſe are very rare, though God is pleaſed they ſhould ſometimes appear in the World, as inſtances of the great corruption and degeneracy of Human Nature, and of the great need of Divine Grace.

But

But surely there is no Temper that is absolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced against that which is good. This would be so terrible an Objection against the Providence of God as would be very hard to be answered. God be thanked, most Tempers are tractable to good Education, and there is very great probability of the good success of it, if it be carefully and wisely managed.

And for the Confirmation of this *Truth* I shall instance in *two* very great *Advantages* of a Religious and virtuous Education of Children.

*1st.* It gives Religion and Virtue the advantage of the first Possession.

*2dly.* The Advantage of Habit and Custom.

*First*, Good Education gives Religion and Virtue the *Advantage* of the *first Possession.* The Mind of Man is an active Principle, and will be employed about something or other. It cannot stand idle, and will therefore take up with that which first offers it self. So soon as Reason puts forth it self, and the Understanding begins to be exercised, the Mind of Man discovers a natural thirst after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes first. If it have not the *Waters of Life* and the *pure streams* of *Goodness* to allay that thirst, it will seek to quench it in the filthy *Puddles* and impure *Pleasures* of this World.

Now since Children will be busying their Minds about something, it is good that they should be entertain'd with the best things, and with the best Notions and Principles of which their Understanding and Age are capable. It is a happy thing to be Principled, and, as I may say, *Prejudiced* the better way, and that Religion should get the first possession of their Hearts. For it is certainly a great Advantage to Religion to be planted in a tender and fresh Soil. And if *Parents* be careless and neglect this advantage, *the Enemy* will be sure to *sow* his *Tares* whilst the *Husbandman* is asleep.

Therefore we should prevent the *Devil* by giving *God* and *Goodness* an early possession of our Children, and by letting Him into their Hearts betimes. *Possession* is a great Point, and it is of mighty consequence to have Nature planted with good Seeds before vicious Inclinations spring up and grow into Strength and Habit.

I know that there is a spiteful *Proverb* currant in the World, and the *Devil* hath taken care to spread it to the discouragement of an early Piety, *A young Saint and an old Devil*; but notwithstanding this, a young Saint is most likely to prove an old one. *Solomon* to be sure was of this mind, and I make no doubt but he made as wise and true *Proverbs* as any body hath done since: *Him* only excepted who was a much *greater* and *wiser* Man than *Solomon.*

*Secondly*, Good Education gives likewise the *Advantage* of *Habit* and *Custom*; and *Custom* is of mighty force. It is, as *Pliny* in one of his *Epistles* says of it, *efficacissimus omnium rerum Magister, the most powerful and effectual Master in every kind.* It is an acquired and a sort of *Second* Nature, and next to Nature it self a principle of greatest power. Custom bears a huge sway in all Human actions. Men love those things and do them with ease to which they have been long inured and accustomed. And on the contrary Men go against Custom with great regret and uneasiness.

And among all others, *that* Custom is most strong which is begun in Childhood: And we see in Experience the strange power of Education in forming persons to Religion and Virtue. Now Education is nothing but certain Customs planted in Childhood, and which have taken deep Root whilst Nature was tender.

We see likewise in common experience how dangerous an evil Habit and Custom is, and how hard to be alter'd. Therefore the *Cretians*, when they

would

would curse a Man to purpose, wish'd that the *Gods* would engage him in some *bad Custom*, looking upon a Man after that to be irrecoverably lost. So on the other Side, to be engaged in a *good Custom* is an unspeakable advantage; especially for Children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous course, before the Habits of Sin and Vice have taken root and are confirm'd in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: But yet this ought not to discourage us, because it is certain in Experience that a contrary *Custom* hath done much in many Cases, even where *Nature* hath been strongly inclined the other way. *Demosthenes* did by great Resolution and almost infinite Pains, and after a long Habit, alter the natural imperfection of his Speech, and even in despite of Nature became the most eloquent Man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a *Demonstration*, for *what hath been done may be done.*

So that it is not universally true which *Aristotle* says, *That Nature cannot be altered.* It is true indeed in the Instance in which he gives of throwing a Stone upward; you cannot, says he, by any Custom, nay though you fling it up never so often, teach a Stone to ascend of it self: And so it is in many other Instances in which *Nature* is *peremptory:* But Nature is not always so; but sometimes hath a great latitude: As we see in young Trees, which though they naturally grow straight up, yet being gently bent may be made to grow any way. But above all, *Moral* inclinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are subject to the power of a contrary Custom.

Indeed Children when they come to be Men should take great care, that they do not owe their Religion only to *Custom*; but they should upon consideration and due examination of the grounds of it, so far as they are capable of doing it, make it their *Choice.* And yet for all that we must not deny the best Religion in the World this greatest advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happiness for Children to be inclin'd to that which when they come to understand themselves they would make their Choice, if they were indifferent: But an indifferency cannot be preserved in Children: And therefore, since they will certainly be *biassed* one way or other, there is all the reason in the World why we should endeavour to *byass* them the better way. Parents may often mistake about what is best, but if they love their Children they cannot but wish and endeavour that they may be good and do what is best.

I come now to the *last Head* I proposed, which was,

V. To endeavour by the most powerful *Arguments* I can offer, *to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great Care and Conscience.*

If the foregoing *Discourse* be true, what can be said to those who are guilty in the highest degree of the gross neglect of this great Duty? who, neither by *Instruction*, nor *Example*, nor *Restraint* from evil, do endeavour to make their Children good. Some Parents are such *Monsters*, I had almost said *Devils*, as not to know how *to give good things to their Children*; but instead of *bread* give them a *stone*, instead of *fish* give them a *serpent*, instead of an *egg* give them a *scorpion*, as our *Saviour* expresseth it.

These are *evil* indeed, who train up their Children for ruin and destruction; in the service of the *Devil*, and in the Trade and Mystery of iniquity: Who instead of teaching them the *Fear of the Lord*, infuse into them the Principles of *Atheism*, and *Irreligion*, and *Prophaneness:* Instead of teaching them to love and reverence Religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to *make a mock* both of *Sin* and *Holiness*: Instead of training them up in the

the knowledge of the *H. Scriptures which are able to make* men *wise unto Salvation*, they do *ædificare ad Gehennam, they edifie them for Hell*, by teaching them to profane that *Holy Book*, and to abuse the *Word of God* which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into Jest and Raillery: Instead of teaching them to *Pray* and to *bless* the *Name of God*, they teach them to *Blasphene* that *Great and terrible Name*, and to *prophane* it by their continual *Oaths* and *Imprecations*: And instead of bringing them to *God's Church*, they carry them to the *Devil's Chappels*, to *Playhouses* and Places of *debauchery*, those *Schools* and *Nurseries* of *Lewdness* and *Vice*.

Thus they, who ought to be the great *Teachers* and *Examples* of *Holiness* and *Virtue*, are the chief *Encouragers* and *Patterns* of *Vice* and *Wickedness* in their Children; and instead of *restraining* them from Evil, they *countenance* them in it, and check all forward inclinations to Goodness; till at last they make them *ten times more the Children of Wrath*, than they were by that *corrupt Nature* which they derived from them; and hereby *treasure up* both for their Children and *themselves*, *wrath against the Day of wrath and the Revelations of the righteous Judgments of God*.

But I hope there are few or none *such* here. They do not use to frequent God's House and Worship. And therefore I shall apply my self to those who are not so notoriously guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good Education of their Children. And for the greater conviction of such Parents, I shall offer to them the following *Considerations*.

*First*, Consider what a sad *Inheritance* you have conveyed to your Children. You have transmitted to them corrupt and depraved Natures, evil and vicious Inclinations: You have begotten them in your own Image and likeness, so that *by Nature* they are *Children of wrath*. Now methinks Parents that have a due sense of this should be very solicitous, by the best means they can use, to free them from that *Curse*; by endeavouring to correct those perverse dispositions and cursed inclinations which they have transmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken Estate which from you is descended upon them.

When a Man hath by *Treason tainted* his *Blood* and *forfeited* his *Estate*, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his Children, and think of the Injury hath been done to them by his Fault? And how solicitous is he, before he dye, to petition the *King* for favour to his Children? How earnestly doth he charge his Friends to be careful of them and kind to them? That by these means he may make the best reparation he can of their *Fortune* which hath been ruin'd by his *Fault*.

And have Parents such a tenderness for their Children, in reference to their Estate and Condition in this World; and have they none for the good estate of their Souls and their eternal Condition in another World? If you are sensible that their *Blood* is tainted, and that their best *Fortunes* are ruin'd by your sad *Misfortune*; Why do you not bestir your selves for the repairing of God's Image in them? Why do you not *travel in birth till Christ be formed in them?* Why do you not pray earnestly to *God* and give *Him* no rest, who hath *reprieved* and it may be pardoned *you*, that He would extend his Grace to *them* also, and grant them the Blessings of his *New Covenant?*

All your Children are begotten of the *Bond-woman*; therefore we should pray as *Abraham* did, *O that Ishmael may live in thy sight:* O that these Sons of *Hagar* may be Heirs of a Blessing.

*Secondly*, Consider in the next place, that good Education is the very best Inheritance that you can leave to your Children. It is a wise *Saying* of *Solomon*, that *Wisdom is good with an Inheritance*; but surely an *Inheritance* with-
Eccl.7.11.

out

out *Wisdom* and *Virtue* to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many Parents are there who omit no Care and Industry to get an Estate that they may leave it to their Children, but use no means to form their Minds and Manners for the right use and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great Poverty and Straits?

Dost thou love thy Child? This is true love to any one, to do the best for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your Children, this may be all the Fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good Education. All other things are uncertain. You may raise your Children to *Honour*, and settle a Noble *Estate* upon them to support it: You may leave them, as you think, to faithful *Guardians*, and by kindness and obligation procure them many *Friends*: And when you have done all this, their *Guardians* may prove unfaithful and treacherous, and in the Changes and Revolutions of the World their *Honours* may slip from under them, and their *Riches may take to themselves wings and fly away*: And when these are gone, and they come to be nipp'd with the Frosts of Adversity, their *Friends* will fall off like leaves in *Autumn. This is a sore evil*, which yet *I have seen under the Sun.*

But if the good Education of your Children hath made them wise and virtuous, you have provided an Inheritance for them which is out of the reach of Fortune, and *cannot be taken from them. Crates* the *Philosopher* used to stand in the highest Places of the City, and to cry out to the Inhabitants, *O ye People! why do you toil to get Estates for your Children, when you take no care of their Education?* This is, as *Diogenes* said, to take care of the *Shooe*, but none of the *Foot* that is to wear it; to take great Pains for an *Estate* for your Children, but none at all to teach them how to use it; that is, to take great care to undoe them, but none to make them happy.

*Thirdly*, Consider that by a careful and Religious Education of your Children you provide for your own Comfort and Happiness. However they happen to prove, *you* will have the Comfort of a good Conscience and of having done your Duty. If they be good, they are matter of great Comfort and Joy to their Parents. *A wise Son*, saith *Solomon*, *maketh a glad Father.* It is a great satisfaction to see that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and Industry, and that the work of our hands doth prosper. The *Son* of *Sirach*, among several things for which he reckons a Man happy, mentions this in the first place, *He that hath joy of his Children.* Ecclus. 25. 7.

On the contrary, in wicked Children the honour of a Family fails, our Name withers, and in the next Generation will quite be blotted out: Whereas a hopeful Posterity is a prospect of a kind of *Eternity.* We cannot leave a better and more lasting *Monument* of our selves, than in wise and virtuous Children. *Buildings* and *Books* are but *dead* things in comparison of these *living Memorials* of our selves.

By the good Education of your Children you provide for your selves some of the best Comforts both for this World and the other. For *this World*; and that at such a time when you most stand in need of Comfort, I mean the time of *Sickness* and *old Age*. Wise Men have been wont to lay up some *præsidia Senectutis*, something to support them in that gloomy and melancholy Time, as *Books* and *Friends*, or the like. But there is no such external Comfort at such a time as good and dutiful Children. They will *then* be the *light of our Eyes*, and the *Cordial* of our fainting Spirits; and will recompence all our former care of *them* by their present care of *us*: And when we are decaying and withering away, we shall have the pleasure to see our

*Youth* as it were *renewed*, and our selves flourishing again in our Children. The *Son of Sirach* speaking of the Comfort which a good Father hath in a
Eclus. 30. 4, 5. well educated Son, *Though he dye*, says he, *yet he is as if he were not dead, for he hath left one behind him that is like himself. While he lived he saw and rejoyced in him, and when he died he was not sorrowful.*

Whereas, on the contrary, *a foolish Son is*, as *Solomon* tells us, *a heaviness to his Mother*, the miscarriage of a Child being apt most tenderly to affect the *Mother*. Such Parents as neglect their Children, do as it were provide so many *Pains* and *Aches* for themselves against they come to be *Old*. And rebellious Children are to their infirm and aged Parents so many aggravations of an evil Day, so many burthens of their Age: They help to bow them down and to bring *their gray hairs* so much the sooner *with sorrow to the grave*. They do usually repay their Parents all the neglects of their Education by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good Children will likewise be an unspeakable *Comfort* to us in the *Other World*. When we come to appear before God at the *Day of Judgment*, to be able to say to *Him*, *Lo! here am I and the Children which thou hast given me*: How will this comfort our Hearts, and make us lift up our Heads with Joy in *that Day*?

*Fourthly*, Consider that the surest Foundation of the publick welfare and happiness is laid in the good Education of Children. *Families* are increased by *Children*, and *Cities* and *Nations* are made up of *Families*. And this is a matter of so great Concernment both to *Religion* and the *Civil* happiness of a Nation, that antiently the best constituted *Commonwealths* did commit this care to the *Magistrate* more than to *Parents*.

When *Antipater* demanded of the *Spartans* fifty of their Children for *Hostages*, they offer'd rather to deliver to Him twice as many Men; so much did they value the loss of their *Countries* Education. But now amongst us this Work lies chiefly upon *Parents*. There are several ways of reforming Men; by the *Laws* of the *Civil Magistrate*, and by the publick *Preaching* of *Ministers*. But the most likely and hopeful Reformation of the World must begin with *Children*. Wholsome *Laws* and good *Sermons* are but slow and late ways: The timely and the most compendious way is good Education. This may be an effectual *Prevention* of evil, whereas all after-ways are but *Remedies*, which do always suppose some neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our *Laws* leave so much to Parents, our Care should be so much the greater: and we should remember that we bring up our Children for the *Publick*, and that if they live to be *Men*, as they come out of our hands they will prove a publick Happiness or Mischief to the Age. So that we can no way better deserve of Mankind and be greater Benefactors to the World, than by Peopling it with a *Righteous Off-spring*. Good Children are the hopes of Posterity, and we cannot leave the World a better *Legacy* than well-disciplin'd Children. This gives the World the best Security that Religion will be Propagated to Posterity, and that the *Generations to come* shall know God, and *the Children that are to be born shall fear the Lord*.

This was the great Glory of *Abraham*, next to his being *the Friend of God*, that he was the *Father of the Faithful*. And the careful Education of Children, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, is so honourable to Parents, that God himself would not pass it by in *Abraham* without special mention
Gen. 18. 19. of it to his everlasting commendation: *I know Abraham*, says God, *that he will command his Children and his Houshold after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do Justice and Judgment.*

*Fifthly*,

*Fifthly*, Consider yet further, the great Evils consequent upon this neglect. And they are Manifold. But not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in *this*, the final miscarriage and ruin of Children. Do but leave depraved corrupt Nature to its self, and it will take its own Course, and the end of it in all probability will be miserable.

If the generous Seeds of Religion and Virtue be not carefully sown in the tender Minds of Children, and those Seeds be not cultivated by good Education, there will certainly spring up *Briars* and *Thorns*, of which Parents will not only feel the inconvenience, but every body else that comes near them.

*Neglectis urenda filix innascitur Agris.*

If the Ground be not planted with something that is good, it will bring forth that which is either useless or hurtful, or both; For *Nature* is seldom barren, it will either bring forth *useful Plants*, or *Weeds*.

We are naturally inclined to Evil, and the neglect of Education puts Children upon a kind of necessity of becoming what they are naturally inclin'd to be. Do but let them alone, and they will soon be habituated to Sin and Vice. And when they are once accustomed to do evil, they have lost their Liberty and Choice: They are then hardly capable of good counsel and instruction: Or if they be Patient to hear it, they have no Power to follow it, being bound in the Chains of their Sins, and *led Captive by Satan at his pleasure.* And when they have brought themselves into this condition, their *Ruin* seems to be *sealed*, and without a Miracle of God's Grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the Mischief of this Neglect end here, but it extends it self to the *Publick*, and to *Posterity*. If we neglect the good Education of our Children, they will in all probability prove bad Men; and *these* will neglect their Children; and so the Foundation of an endless Mischief is laid; and our Posterity will be bad Members both of Church and Commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of *Instruction*, they will either be *ignorant* or *erroneous*: either they will not mind Religion, or they will disturb the Church with new and wild Opinions: And I fear, that the neglect of instructing and *Catechising* Youth, of which this Age hath been so grosly guilty, hath made it so Fruitful of Errors and strange Opinions.

But if besides *this*, no care be taken of their *Lives* and *Manners*, they will become burthens of the Earth, and Pests of Human Society, and so much Poison and Infection let abroad into the World.

*Sixthly* and *Lastly*, Parents should often consider that the neglect of this Duty will not only involve them in the *inconvenience*, and *shame*, and *sorrow*, of their Childrens Miscarriage, but in a great measure in the *guilt* of it: They will have a great share in all the Evil they do, and be in some sort chargeable with all the Sins they commit. If the Children bring forth wild and sowr Grapes, the Parents Teeth will be set on edge.

The temporal mischiefs and inconveniencies which come from the careless Education of Children as to *Credit*, *Health* and *Estate*, all which do usually suffer by the vicious and lewd courses of your Children; these methinks should awaken your *care* and *diligence*: But what is this to the *guilt* which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedness will be put upon your score; and possibly the Sins, which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other World, and bring new fewel to Hell, to heat that Furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that *Parents* must one Day be accountable for all their neglects of their *Children:* And so likewise shall *Ministers* and *Masters of Families* for their *People* and *Servants*, so far as they had the Charge of them.

And what will Parents be able to say to God at the Day of Judgment for all their neglects of their Children, in matter of *Instruction*, and *Example*, and *Restraint* from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God shall arise terribly to Judgment, and say to you, *Behold! the Children which I have given you; They were ignorant, and you instructed them not; They made themselves vile, and you restrained them not: Why did not you teach them at Home, and bring them to Church to the Publick Ordinances and Worship of God, and train them up to the exercise of Piety and Devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them good Instruction, but you gave them bad Example: And lo! they have followed you to Hell, to be an addition to your Torment there.*

*Unnatural Wretches! that have thus neglected, and by your neglect destroyed those, whose Happiness by so many bonds of Duty and Affection you were obliged to procure; Behold! the Books are now open, and there is not one Prayer upon Record that ever you put up for your Children: There is no Memorial, no not so much as of one Hour that ever was seriously spent to train them up to a Sense of God, and to the Knowledge of their Duty: But on the contrary it appears, that you have many ways contrived their Misery, and contributed to their Ruin, and helped forward their Damnation. How could you be thus unnatural? How could you thus hate your own Flesh, and hate your own Souls? How much better had it been for them, and how much better for you, that they had never been born?*

Would not such a heavy Charge as this make every Joynt of you to tremble? Will it not cut you to the Heart, and pierce your very Souls, to have your Children challenge you in *that Day*, and say to you one by one, *Had you been as careful to teach me the good Knowledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it: Had you been but as forward to instruct me in my Duty, as I was ready to have hearken'd to it, it had not been with me as it is at this Day; I had not now stood trembling here in a fearful expectatian of the eternal Doom which is just ready to be pass'd upon me. Cursed be the Man that begat me, and the Paps that gave me suck. 'Tis to you that I must in a great measure owe my everlasting undoing.* Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our Children in *that great and terrible Day of the Lord?*

I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would by all this, if it be possible, awaken Parents to a Sense of their Duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many Parents are as to the Religious Education of their Children, I cannot but think of that *Saying* of *Augustus* concerning *Herod*, *Better be his Dog than his Child*: I think it was spoken to another purpose, but is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of: Better to be some Men's *Dogs*, or *Hawks*, or *Horses*, than their *Children*: For they take a greater care to breed and train up *these* to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their *Children* for eternal Happiness.

Upon all these accounts, *Train up a Child in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it*: That neither your Children may be miserable by your Fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a Duty towards them. God grant that all that are concerned may lay these things seriously to heart: For his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*; To *Whom*, with *Thee O Father*, and the *Holy Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory both now and ever. *Amen.*

SER-

# SERMON LIV.

## OF THE
## *Advantages of an Early PIETY.*

Preach'd in the

Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, in the Year, 1662.

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## ECCLES. XII. 1.

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

IN the former *Discourses*, concerning the *Education of Children*, I have carried the Argument through the state of *Childhood* to the beginning of the next step of their Age which we call *Youth*; when they come to exercise their Reason, and to be fit to take upon themselves the performance of that *Solemn Vow* which was made for them by their *Sureties* in *Baptism*.

To encourage them to set seriously and in good earnest about this Work, I shall now add another *Discourse* concerning the *Advantages of an Early Piety*. And to this purpose I have chosen for the foundation of it these Words of *Solomon*, in his *Book* called *Ecclesiastes* or the *Preacher*: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no Pleasure in them.*

It will not be necessary to give an Account of the *Context* any further than to tell you, that this *Book* of the *Royal Preacher* is a lively description of the Vanity of the World in general, and particularly of the Life of Man. This is the main Body of his *Sermon*, in which there are here and there scattered many serious Reflections upon our selves, and very weighty Considerations to quicken our preparations for our latter end, and to put us in mind of *the days of darkness which will be many*, as the *Preacher* tells us in the *Chapter* before the *Text*.

Among these is the Admonition and Advice in the Words of the *Text*: Which do indeed concern those that are *Young*, but yet will afford useful matter of Meditation to Persons of all Ages and Conditions whatsoever: Of great thankfulness to Almighty God from those who by the Grace of God, and his Blessing upon a pious Education, have entred upon a Religious course betimes: And of a deep Sorrow and Repentance to those who have neglected and let slip this best Opportunity of their Lives; and of taking up a firm Resolution of redeeming that loss, as much as is possible, by their future care and diligence: And to them more especially, who are grown old

and have not yet begun this great and necessary Work, it will minister occasion to resolve upon a speedy retreat, and without any further delay to return to God and their Duty; lest the Opportunity of doing it, which is now almost quite spent, be lost for ever.

The *Text* contains a *Duty*, which is to *remember our Creator*; and a *Limitation* of it, more especially to one particular *Age* and *Time* of our Life; *in the Days of our Youth*: Not to exclude any other Age, but to lay a particular *Emphasis* and weight upon *this*: *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*, that is, more especially in this Age of thy Life: To intimate to us, both that this is the fittest Season, and that we cannot begin this Work too soon.

And this is further illustrated by the opposition of it to *Old Age*: *When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them*: This is a Description of *Old Age*, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which in respect of the cares and griefs, the distempers and infirmities which usually attend it, is rather a Burthen than a Pleasure.

In the handling of these *Words*, I shall do these *three* things:

*First*, I shall consider the Nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoyn'd, and that is to *remember God*.

*Secondly*, I shall consider what there is in the Notion of God as *Creator* which is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige us to the remembrance of Him.

*Thirdly*, I shall consider the *Limitation* of this Duty more especially to this particular Age of our Lives, *the Days of our Youth*: Why we should begin this Work then, and not put it off to the Time of Old Age.

I. I shall consider the nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoin'd, which is to *remember our Creator*. For the understanding of which *Expression* and others of the like Nature in *Scripture*, it is to be consider'd that it is very usual in *Scripture* to express *Religion* and the *whole Duty of* Man by some eminent *Act*, or *Principle*, or *Part* of *Religion*: Sometimes by the *Knowledge* of God, and by *Faith* in Him; and very frequently by the *Fear* and by the *Love* of God; because these are the great *Principles* and *Parts* of *Religion*: And so likewise, though not so frequently, *Religion* is express'd by the *Remembrance* of God: Now *Remembrance* is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To remember God is to have him actually in our Minds, and upon all proper occasions to revive the thoughts of Him, and as *David* expresseth it, to *set him always before us*: *I set the Lord*, says he, *always before me*, that is, God was continually present to his Mind and thoughts.

And in opposition to this we find wicked men in *Scripture* described by the contrary quality, *forgetfulness* of God: So they are described in *Job*;
Job 8.13. *Such are the Paths of them that forget God*, that is, of the wicked: And the
Psal.9.17. same description *David* gives of them. *The wicked*, says he, *shall be turned*
Psal.10.4. *into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God*: And elsewhere he gives the same character of a wicked Man, that *God is not in all his thoughts*.

And the course of a Religious Life is not unfitly express'd by our *Remembrance of God*. For to *remember* a Person or Thing is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting Occasions; to think actually of them, so as to do that which the remembrance of them does require, or prompt us to. To remember a Friend, is to be ready upon occasion to do him all good offices: To remember a kindness and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and

require it when there is an Opportunity: To remember an injury is to be ready to revenge it: And in a word to remember any thing is to be mindful to do that which the memory of such a thing doth naturally suggest to us.

So that to *remember God*, is frequently and in our most serious and retired thoughts to consider that there is such a *Being* as *God* is; of all *Power* and *Perfection*, who made us and all other things, and hath given us Laws to live by, suitable to our Natures; and will call us to a strict account for our observance or violation of them, and accordingly reward and punish us; very often in this World, and to be sure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of God and of his infinite Perfections, and to live continually under the Power and awe of these apprehensions, that he is infinitely wise and good, holy and just; that he is always present with us, and observes what we do, and is intimate to our most secret thoughts, and *will bring every work into Judgment, and every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; as the *Preacher* tells us in the conclusion of this *Sermon*.

The Duty then here required of us, is so soon as we arrive at the use of Reason and the exercise of our Understandings, to take God into Consideration, and to begin a Religious Course of Life betimes; to consecrate the beginning of our Days and the flower and strength of them to his Service: Whilst our Mind is yet soft and tender, and in a great measure free from all other impressions, to be mindful of the *Being* that is above us; and in all our designs and actions to take God into consideration, and to do every thing in his Fear, and with an eye to his Glory. *Remember thy Creator*, that is, honour, fear, love, obey and serve Him; and in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of God, and hath him continually in his thoughts.

II. I shall in the next place consider, what there is in the Notion of God as our *Creator* that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of God. The *Text* does not barely require us to *remember* God, but to remember him as the Author and Founder of our Beings: *Remember thy Creator*. And there is certainly some particular *Emphasis* in it, so that God considered under the Notion of our *Creator* is apt to strike us with a particular regard and awe of him. And that upon a *threefold* account; as *Creation* is a sensible demonstration to us. *1st*. Of the *Being*. *2dly*. Of the *Power*, and *3dly*. Of the *Goodness* of God.

*First*, Of His *Being*. The *Creation* is of all other the most sensible and obvious Argument of a Deity. Other considerations may work upon our Reason and Understanding, but this doth as it were bring God down to our senses. So often as we look up to Heaven, or down upon the Earth; upon our Selves, or into our selves; upon the things without us, and round about us: Which way soever we turn our eyes, we are encounter'd with plain evidences of a *Superior Being*, which made us and all other things: Every thing which we behold with our eyes doth in some way or other represent God to us and bring him to our minds, so as we cannot avoid the sight of Him if we would. So the *Psalmist* tells us; *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament shews the work of his hands*. And so likewise St. *Paul*: *The invisible things of Him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly seen being understood by the things which are made; even his eternal Power and Godhead*. Psal. 19. 1. Rom. 1. 20

*Secondly*, As the *Creation* is a demonstration of God's infinite *Power*. And this Consideration is apt to work upon our *Fear*, the most wakeful Passion of

all

all other in the Soul of Man: Insomuch that the *Atheist* would fain ascribe the Original apprehension and belief of a Deity to the natural Fears of Men; *Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor, Fear first made Gods*; and by this means would fain perswade us, that it is so far from being true that God is our *Creator*, that He is meerly the *Creature* of our own vain *Fear* and *Imagination*.

But surely this is very unreasonable. For if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reason why we should stand in awe of Him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; because He who made us and all other things, if we neglect Him and forget so great a Benefactor, can as easily make us miserable, or turn us out of Being. Therefore *Remember thy Creator*, and despise or forget him at thy utmost peril.

*Thirdly*, As the *Creation* is a demonstration of the *Goodness* of God to his Creatures. This Consideration of God as our *Creator* doth naturally suggest to our minds, that his Goodness brought us into Being; and that if Being be a Benefit, God is the Fountain and Author of it, that his Goodness called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are; for *of his good Pleasure we are and were created*. He was under no necessity of doing it; for He was from eternal Ages happy in himself before we were, and would have been so to all eternity though we had never been; nor was it possible He could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And He is not only our *Creator* as He gave us our Beings at first, but likewise as we are preserved and continued in Life by the same Goodness which first gave us Life and Breath; for *of his Goodness we ARE* as well as *were created*.

And can we forget so great a Benefactor, and be *unmindful of the God that formed us*? Can we chuse but remember the Founder of our Beings, the great Patron and Preserver of our Lives? And so soon as we arrive at the use of Reason, and discover this great Benefactor to whom we owe our Lives and all the Blessings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to say with *David*, *O come, let us Worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker: For He is the Lord our God, it is He that hath made us and not we our selves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture.* I proceed to consider in the

III. and last place, The Reason of the *Limitation* of this Duty more especially to this particular *Age* of our Lives, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them: NOW; in the days of thy Youth*; by which *Solomon* plainly designs *two* things.

*First*, To engage young Persons to begin this great and necessary Work of Religion betimes, and assoon as ever they are capable of taking it into consideration, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth.* And the Son of *Sirach* much to the same purpose, speaking of one that in good earnest applies his heart to Wisdom, describes him in this manner, *He will give his heart to resort early to the Lord that made him*; which is the same with the expression in the *Text*, of *remembring our Creator in the days of our Youth.*

Ecclus.

*Secondly*, To engage young Persons to set about this Work *presently*, and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as most are apt to do; *Remember NOW thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*: Especially, not to adjourn it to the most unfit and improper time of all other, to the time of infirmity and old Age, *NOW, in the days of thy Youth; when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them: While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not darken'd*, &c.

And

And how much reaſon there is to preſs both theſe Conſiderations upon young Perſons I ſhall endeavour to ſhew in the following Particulars.

*Firſt*, Becauſe in this Age of our Lives we have the greateſt and moſt ſenſible obligation to *remember* God *our Creator*: *In the days of our Youth*, when the Bleſſing and Benefit of Life is new, and the memory of it freſh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be ſo, but we find it true which *Seneca* ſays, *Nihil citius ſeneſcit quàm gratia*, *Nothing ſooner grows old and out of date than obligation*; and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greateſt reaſon to remember.

In this Age of our Life, when we begin to come to the free uſe and exerciſe of our Reaſon, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in, and if we were not taught it we ſhould, though perhaps more ſlowly, diſcover and find it out of our ſelves: I ſay, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in and inquiſitive about is the *Author* of our Beings, and how we came into the World: And when God firſt appears to our Minds, and we come by degrees clearly to underſtand by whoſe Bounty and Bleſſing it is that we are and have been preſerved thus long, without our own care; principally by the Providence of God, and under Him by thoſe inſtruments which he hath raiſed and preſerved for that Purpoſe: When we conſider this, we cannot but be ſtrangely ſurpriz'd both with the Novelty of the Benefit and the Greatneſs of it.

And when we have well viewed our Selves, and look'd about us, upon the Creatures below us, all of them ſubject to our Dominion and Uſe: And when we conſider ſeriouſly in what a noble Rank and Order of Creatures we are placed; and how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, not groveling upon the Earth or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful and upright ſhape of Body, and ſuch a Majeſty of Countenance as if we were all Kings of the Creation: And which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with Minds and Underſtandings, with Reaſon and Speech, whereby we are capable not only of converſing with and benefiting one another, but alſo of the knowledge and friendſhip and enjoyment of the Beſt and moſt Perfect of Beings God himſelf: I ſay, when we firſt conſider this and meditate ſeriouſly upon it, can we poſſibly ever after forget God? Shall we not naturally break out into that enquiry which *Elihu* thinks ſo proper for Man that he wonders it is not in every Man's mouth, *Where is God my Maker, who teacheth me more than the Beaſts of the Earth, and maketh me wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven?* Job 35. 10, 11.

So that there is a very ſpecial obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this Age of our Lives, when we firſt come to the Knowledge of Him, and when the ſenſe of his Favours is freſh and new to us; and not only ſo, but when the Bleſſing of Life is at the very beſt and in its verdure and flower; when our Health is in its ſtrength and vigor, and the pleaſures and enjoyments of Life have their full taſte and perfect reliſh. So *Job* deſcribes the days of his youth, *O that I were as in months paſt, as in the days when God preſerved me; when his Candle ſhined upon my head, and when by his Light I walked through darkneſs, as I was in the days of my Youth*, &c. Job 29. 2, 3, 4.

Indeed when the *evil days* are once *come*, and thou art enter'd upon *the years* in which thou thy ſelf *haſt no pleaſure*, there might be ſome ſort of pretence *then* to forget God; becauſe *then* Life begins to wither and decay, and not only the Gloſs and Beauty but even the Comfort and Sweetneſs of it is gone, and it becomes an inſipid and taſtleſs thing: *But thou art inexcuſable, O Man, whoever thou art*, if thou art unmindful of God in the beſt Age of thy Life, and when the ſenſe of his Benefits ought upon all accounts to make the ſtrongeſt and deepeſt impreſſions upon thy Mind.

*Secondly*, The Reaſon will be yet ſtronger to put us upon this, if we conſider that notwithſtanding the great obligation which lies upon us to *remember our Creator in the days of our Youth*, we are moſt apt at that time of all other to forget Him. For that which is the great Bleſſing of Youth is alſo the great Danger of it, I mean, the Health and Proſperity of it; and though Men have *then* leaſt reaſon, yet are they moſt apt to forget God in the height of pleaſure and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extreamly addicted to Pleaſure, becauſe it is moſt capable and moſt ſenſible of it; and where we are moſt apt to be tranſported, there we are moſt apt to tranſgreſs. Nothing does ſo beſot the Mind and extinguiſh in it all ſenſe of Divine things as ſenſual Pleaſures. If we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from Religion and ſteal away our hearts from God. For *no Man can ſerve two Maſters*; and *the carnal mind is enmity againſt God*.

Beſides that Youth is raſh and inconſiderate, becauſe unexperienced; and conſequently not apt to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concernments of this temporal Life; much leſs of that which ſeems to be at ſo much a greater diſtance, and for that reaſon is ſo very ſeldom in our thoughts.

*Thirdly*, Becauſe this Age is of all other the fitteſt and beſt to begin a Religious courſe of Life. And this does not condradict the former Argument, though it ſeems to do ſo. For as it is true of Children, that they are moſt prone to be idle, and yet fitteſt to learn: ſo in the caſe we are ſpeaking of both are true, that youth is an age wherein we are too apt, if left to our ſelves, to forget God and Religion, and yet at the ſame time fitteſt to receive the Impreſſions of it.

Youth is *ætatis Diſciplinæ*, the proper *Age of Diſcipline*; very obſequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of Impreſſion and imbibe any Tincture: Now we ſhould lay hold of this golden Opportunity. This Age of ſuppleneſs, and obedience, and patience for labour, ſhould be plied by Parents, before that rigour and ſtiffneſs which grows with Years come on too faſt. Childhood and Youth are choice Seaſons for the planting of Religion and Virtue, and if Parents and Teachers ſleep in this Seed-time they are ill Husbandmen; for this is *the time of plowing and ſowing*.

This Age is certainly the moſt proper for Inſtruction, according to that of the *Prophet*, *whom ſhall he teach Knowledge? Whom ſhall he make to*
Iſa. 28. 9. *underſtand Doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breaſt. For precept muſt be upon precept and line upon line, here a little and there a little.* And the ſooner this is done, the better; only things muſt be inſtilled into them gently and by degrees.

It is a noted Saying of *Ariſtotle*, *That young Perſons are not to hear Lectures of Moral Philoſophy*; becauſe at that Age Paſſion is ſo perdominant and unruly: By which, I think he only means that the Minds of young Perſons are leaſt prepared to receive the Precepts of Morality and to ſubmit to them; but that he does not hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be uſed to form the Minds and Manners of Youth to Virtue and Goodneſs. He certainly underſtood the nature and power of evil Habits too well to be of that mind; and conſequently muſt think that the Principles of Morality ought with great care and diligence to be inſtill'd into young perſons betimes: Becauſe they of all other have the moſt need of this kind of Inſtruction, and this Age is the moſt proper Seaſon for it: And the leſs their Minds are prepared for it, ſo much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and ſubdue their Paſſions before they

they grow too stiff and headstrong. So that if the Seeds of Religion and Virtue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old Age? according to that of the Son of *Sirach*, *If thou hast gathered nothing in thy Youth, how canst thou expect to find any thing in thine Age?* Ecclus. 25. 13.

Young years are tender and easily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any fashion, they are *udum & molle lutum*, like *moist and soft clay* which is pliable to any form; but soon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very difficult thing to make impressions upon Age, and to deface the Evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good Instruction hath been neglected at first, a conceited Ignorance doth commonly take possession, and obstruct all the passages through which Knowledge and wisdom should enter into us.

Upon this Consideration the Work of Religion should be begun betimes, because it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is just the same thing for young persons to be enter'd into a Religious course and to have their Minds habituated to Virtue before vicious Customs have got place and strength in us: For whoever shall attempt this afterwards will meet with infinite difficulty and opposition, and must dispute his ground by Inches.

It is good therefore to do that which must be done one time or other, when it is easiest to be done; when we may do it with the greatest advantage, and are likely to meet with the least and weakest opposition. We should anticipate Vice, and prevent the Devil and the World by letting God into our hearts betimes and giving Religion the first *seisine* and possession of our Souls. This is the time of sowing our Seed, which must by no means be neglected. For the Soul will not lye fallow; good or evil will come up. If our Minds be not cultivated by Religion, Sin and Vice will get the possession of them: but if our tender years be seasoned with the Knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following course of our Lives.

In a word, this Age of our Lives is proper for Labour and Conflict; because Youth is full of heat, and vigor, of courage, and resolution to enterprize and effect difficult things. This heat indeed renders young persons very unfit to advise and direct themselves, and therefore they have need to be advised and directed by those who are wiser and more experienced: But yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are bad at Counsel, they are admirable at execution, when their heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickness, of courage and constancy in the way wherein they are set.

Besides, that Youth hath a great sense of Honour and Virtue, of Praise and Commendation, which are of great force to engage young Persons to attempt worthy and excellent things: For hope and confidence, strength and courage, with which sense of Honour and desire of Praise are apt to inspire them, are admirable instruments of Victory and Mastery in any kind; and these are proper and most peculiar to Youth, *I write unto you young Men*, saith St. *John*, *because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil One.*

And, besides the spirit and vigor of Youth, young persons have several other qualities which makes them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, because they have not been often deceived; and this is a very good quality in a Learner. And they are full of hopes, which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their strength; because Hope is always of the future, and the Life of young Persons is in a great measure before them and yet to come. And, which is a good Bridle

to reſtrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modeſt and baſhful: And, which is alſo a ſingular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honeſt and commendable than that which is gainful and profitable, being in a great meaſure free from the *love of Money*, which *Experience*, as well as the *Apoſtle*, tells us, *is the root of all evil.* Children are very ſeldom covetous, becauſe they have ſeldom been bitten by want.

*Fourthly*, This is the moſt acceptable Time of all other, becauſe it is the firſt of our Age. Under the *Law* the *firſt-fruits* and the *firſt-born* were God's. In like manner we ſhould devote the *firſt* of our *Age* and *Time* to *Him.* God is the firſt and moſt excellent of Beings, and therefore it is fit that the prime of our Age and the excellency of our Strength ſhould be dedicated to him and his Service.

An early Piety muſt needs be very acceptable and pleaſing to God. Our *Bleſſed Lord* took great pleaſure to ſee *little Children come unto him*; an *Emblem* of the pleaſure he takes that Men ſhould liſt themſelves betimes in his ſervice. St. *John* was the youngeſt of all the *Diſciples*, and our *Saviour* had a very particular kindneſs and affection for him; for he is ſaid to be *the Diſciple whom Jeſus loved.*

It is a good ſign that we value God as we ought, and have a true eſteem for his ſervice, when we can find in our hearts to give him our *good Days*, and *the years* which we our ſelves *have pleaſure in*: And that we have a grateful ſenſe of his benefits and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the quickeſt and beſt returns we can, and think nothing too good to render to *Him* from whom we have received all.

It is likewiſe an argument of great Sincerity, which is the Soul of all Religion and Virtue, when a Man devotes himſelf to God betimes: becauſe it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by thoſe forcible conſtraints, nor driven to God by that preſſing neceſſity which lies upon Men in time of *Sickneſs* and *old Age.* And on the contrary, it cannot but be very diſpleaſing to God to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigour of our Age: When our Blood is warm, and our Spirits quick, and our parts are at the beſt, *then* to think our ſelves too good to ſerve God; what an affront is this to him who hath deſerved ſo infinitely well of us, and beyond the beſt and utmoſt that we can poſſibly do?

Beſides, that there is a peculiar kind of grace and lovelineſs in the worthy and excellent actions of Young Perſons, great things being hardly expected from them at that Age. Early Habits of Virtue, like new Cloaths upon a young and comely Body, ſit very gracefully upon a ſtraight and well-ſhap'd Mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is Joy in Heaven at the converſion of a great and old Sinner, ſo it cannot but be a very delightful Spectacle to God and Angels, and to the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect, to ſee a Young Perſon beſieged by powerful Temptations on every ſide, to acquit himſelf glorioſly, and reſolutely to hold out againſt the moſt violent Aſſaults: To behold one in the pride and flower of his Age, that is Courted by Pleaſures and Honours, by the Devil and all the bewitching Vanities of this World, to reject all theſe and to cleave ſtedfaſtly to God: Nay, to frown upon all theſe Temptations and to look down upon them with Indignation and Scorn, and to ſay, Let thoſe dote upon theſe things, who know no better: Let them adore ſenſual Pleaſures and lying Vanities, who are Ignorant of the ſincere and ſolid Pleaſures of Religion and Virtue: Let them run into the arms of Temptation who can forget God their *Creator*, their *Preſerver*, and *the Guide of their Youth*: As for me, I will ſerve the Lord, and will imploy my whole time

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either innocently or usefully, in serving God, and in doing good to Men who are made after the Image of God. This work shall take up my whole Life, there shall be no void or empty space in it; I will endeavour, as much as possibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the Devil and his Temptations to enter in: Lord, I will be thine, I have chosen thee for my happiness and *my portion for ever*: *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee. Lo! they that are far from thee shall perish: But it is good for me to draw near to God*, to begin and end my Days in his fear and to his Glory.

*Fifthly* and Lastly, This Age of our Life may, for any thing we know, be the only Time we may have for this purpose; and if we cast off the thoughts of God and defer the Business of Religion to old Age, intending, as we pretend, to set about it at that Time, we may be cut off before that Time comes, and *turned into Hell with the People that forget God*.

The Work of Religion is the most necessary of all other, and must be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too soon, but we easily delay it too long; and then we are miserable past all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal Soul, and put his everlasting Happiness upon the greatest Hazard and uncertainty, must make Religion his first Business and Care, must think of God betimes and *remember his Creator in the Days of his Youth*.

I have now done with the *three* things which I proposed to consider from these Words. The *Inferences* from this whole *Discourse* shall be these *two*.

*First*, To perswade those that are young to *remember* God *their Creator*, and to engage in the ways of Religion and Virtue betimes.

*Secondly*, To urge those who have neglected this first and best Opportunity of their Lives, to repent quickly and return to a better mind; lest the Opportunity be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy.

*First*, To perswade those that are young to *remember* God *their Creator* betimes, and to engage early in the ways of Religion and Virtue. Do not suffer your selves to be cheated and bewitched by sensual satisfactions, and to be destroyed by ease and prosperity. Let not a perpetual tenor of Health and Pleasure soften and dissolve your Spirits, and banish all wise and serious thoughts out of your Minds. Be not so foolish and unworthy, as to think that you have a priviledge to forget God when he is most mindful of you; *when the Candle of the Lord shines about your Tabernacle*, and you are enjoying the health and strength, and sweetness of Life.

No Man knows what he does, and what an invaluable Treasure he prodigally wastes, when he lets slip this golden Season and Opportunity of his Life; whilst he is yet innocent and untainted with Sin and Vice, and his Mind is clear of all bad impressions, and capable of the best; not enslaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Consider, that the ways of Religion and Virtue are nothing so difficult and unpleasant now, as they will be hereafter: And that the longer you forget God, and the more you are estranged from Him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him and to return to him: That your Lusts will every day gain more strength, and your hearts by degrees will contract such a stiffness and hardness that it will be no easie matter to work upon them.

Therefore *remember your Creator in the Days of your youth: To day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin.* When will you think of beginning a good course, if not now? You have a great Work before you which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finish'd at once. Your whole Life is no more than sufficient for it; to do it to the best advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your Life, much less of putting it off to the very end of it: When *that night comes, no man can work.*

Consider further; If we will deny God the hearty and vigorous service of our best days, how can we expect that he will accept the faint and flattering Devotions of old Age? Wise Men are wont to forecast and provide some stay and comfort for themselves against the evils and infirmities of that Time; that they may have something to lean upon in their weakness, something to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy Evening: That what they cannot enjoy of present pleasure and satisfaction may in some measure be made up to them in comfortable reflections upon the past actions of a holy and innocent, an useful and well-spent Life.

But on the other hand, if we have neglected Religion, and forgotten God days without number; if we have lived an ungodly and vicious Life, we have treasured up so much guilt and remorse, so many aggravations of our sorrow and anguish against an evil Day; and have foolishly contrived to make our Burthen then heaviest, when we are least able to stand under it; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for Repentance, when there is hardly any space and opportunity left for the exercise of it; and when we shall be utterly dishearten'd from setting about so vast a Work, of which we can see no end; and yet have so very little time for it, that if we do any thing at all in it we shall be forc'd to huddle it up in so much haste and confusion, as will, I doubt, signifie but very little either to our present comfort, or our future happiness.

Consider this in time, all ye that forget God in the Day of your prosperity and in the best Age of your Life, and yet when the Day of Affliction and the infirmities of Age come upon you would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldest not have Him *cast thee off in thine old Age, and forsake thee when thy strength fails,* do thou *remember Him in the Days of thy Youth,* in the prime and vigour of thine Age: For *this is the acceptable Time, this is the Day of Salvation.*

Therefore acquaint thy self with him, and *remember him NOW; in the days of thy Youth;* defer not so necessary a work, no not for one moment: Begin it just *now,* that so thou mayest have made some good progress in it before *the evil days come;* before *the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars be darkened,* and all the Comforts and Joys of Life be fled and gone.

Be not deceived, O Man, whosoever thou art; for *God is not mocked.* He will not be put off by us *with the Days in which we our selves have no pleasure.* Offer up thy self *a living Sacrifice* and not a *Carkass,* if thou wouldest be accepted. Do not provoke and affront the Living God by offering up to him faint Spirits, and feeble hands, and dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful to us in giving us the best Blessings of Life, and all things richly to enjoy; and do we grudge Him the most valuable part of our Lives, and *the years which we our selves have Pleasure in? Do we thus requite the Lord? foolish people and unwise!* Is the Giver of all good things unworthy to receive from us any thing that is good? *If we offer up the lame in Sacrifice, is it not evil? and if we offer up the blind, is it not evil? Offer*

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*it now to thy Governor, and try if he will be pleased with thee and accept thy person.* Hath God deserved so ill at our hands, that we should forget and neglect Him? And hath the Devil deserved so well of us, that we should be contented to spend the best part of our Lives in his Service, which is perfect Slavery? Was he our Creator, or can he make us happy? Nay, does he not carry on a most malicious design to make us for ever miserable?

*Secondly,* Let me urge those who have neglected this first and best Opportunity of their Lives to repent quickly and return to a better mind, lest all opportunity of doing it be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy. Resolve to redeem, if it be possible, the Time which you should have improved: you have squander'd away too much already, waste no more of this precious Opportunity of Life: you have deferr'd a necessary Work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude your selves with vain hopes that this work may be done at any time, and in an Instant; and that if you can but fashion your last breath into *Lord have Mercy upon me,* this will prevail with God and make attonement for the long course of a wicked and sinful Life. What strange thoughts have Men of God and Heaven, what extravagant conceits of the little evil of Sin and the great easiness of Repentance, that can impose upon themselves at this rate?

Bethink your selves better in time, *consider and shew your selves men.* What will you do in the day of your distress, who have neglected God in your most flourishing and prosperous condition? What will you say to him in a dying hour, who scarce ever had one serious thought of him all your Life? Can you have the face at that time to bespeak him in this manner? Lord, now the World and my Lusts have left me, and I feel my self ready to sink into eternal perdition, I lay hold upon thy Mercy to deliver my Soul from going down into the Pit. I have heard strange things of thy Goodness and that thou art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which I always trusted to, that after a long Life of Sin and Vanity thou wouldest at last be pacified with a few penitent words and sighs at the hour of death. Let me not, I pray thee, be disappointed of this hope and put to confusion.

Is this an address fit to be made to a wise Man, much less to the all-wise and just Judge of the World? and yet this seems to be the plain Interpretation of the late and forced application of a great and habitual Sinner to Almighty God in his last extremity, and when he is just giving up the Ghost and going to appear before his dreadful Tribunal.

I say again, let no Man deceive you with vain words, or with vain hopes, or with false notions of a slight and sudden Repentance: As if Heaven were an Hospital founded on purpose to receive all sick and maimed Persons, that when they can live no longer to the Lusts of the flesh and the sinful pleasures of this World can but put up a cold and formal Petition to be admitted there.

No, no, as sure as God is true, they shall never see the Kingdom of God, who instead of seeking it in the first place make it their last Refuge and Retreat: And when they find themselves under the Sentence of Death and Damnation, only to avoid present Execution, and since there is no other remedy, do at last bethink themselves of getting to *Heaven,* and fall upon their Knees to petition the *Great Judge of the World* that they may be *transported* thither.

Can any Man in reason expect that such a Petition will be granted? I tell you Nay; but except you repent sooner, and at a fitter time, and after a better Fashion, you shall certainly perish. As much as God desires the Salvation of Men, he will not prostitute Heaven, and set the Gates of it wide open to those who only fly to it in extremity, but never sought it in good

earnest,

earnest, nor indeed do now care for it or desire it for any other reason, but to excuse them from going to Hell. They have no value for Heaven, because they are in no wise fit for it, but yet they think Hell to be the worse Place of the two.

The ever Blessed God is himself abundantly sufficient for his own Happiness, and does not need our Company to make any addition to it: Nor yet is Heaven so desolate a Place, or so utterly void of Inhabitants, that like some newly discovered *Plantation* it should be glad to receive the most vile and profligate persons, the scum and refuse of Mankind. There are an innumerable Company of Glorious Angels, much nobler Creatures than the best of Men, to people those blessed Regions. *Thousands of Thousands* continually *stand before God, and ten Thousand times ten Thousands minister unto Him.*

We do absolutely stand in need of God to make us happy, but he hath no need of us to help him to be so. God indeed is so good, as to desire our Happiness as earnestly as if it were necessary to his own: But he is Happy in and from himself, and without him it is impossible we should be Happy, nay, we must of necessity be for ever miserable.

To conclude; if we would have God to accept us in a dying Hour, and our *B. Saviour to remember us* now *he is in his Kingdom*, let us think of him betimes, and *acquaint our selves with him that we may be at Peace*: *NOW*; before *the evil days come, and the Years draw nigh when we shall say, we have no pleasure in them.*

*O that men were wise, that they understood this, and that they would consider their latter end.* Which God of his infinite Goodness grant that we may all seriously lay to heart, *in this our day*, and may *learn* betimes *so to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts to wisdom*: For his mercies sake in *Jesus Christ*, to whom with the *Father* and the *H. Ghost*, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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THE

# THE RULE OF FAITH.

OR, AN

# ANSWER

TO THE

TREATISE of Mr. *I. S.*

ENTITLED

**Sure-Footing, &c.**

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By His Grace *JOHN*, Late Lord Arch-Bishop of *CANTERBURY*.

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The Eighth Edition.

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*LONDON:*

Printed by *T. W.* for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the *Three Pigeons* against the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill*, and *William Rogers* at the *Sun* against St. *Dunstan*'s Church in *Fleetstreet*, 1707.

TO MY

# Honoured and Learned Friend,

# Dr. Stillingfleet.

SIR,

I *Have with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction read over your* Book, *which I find in every part answerable to its* Title, *viz.* A Rational Account of the Grounds of the Protestant Religion. *And now I thank you for it, not onely as a private favour, but a publick benefit. No sooner had I perused it, but I met with a* Discourse *entituled,* Sure-footing in Christianity. *And although I have no small prejudice against Books with conceited Titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, because it pretended to contain* Animadversions on some Passages *in your Book which I had so lately read over. Upon perusal of which* Animadversions, *I found that the* Author *of them had attaqued (and in his own opinion confuted) a page or two in your Book. This drew me on to take a view of his main* Discourses; *which because they are in great vogue among some of his own Party, and do with an unusual kind of confidence and ostentation pretend to the newest and most exact* fashion *of writing* Controversie, *as being all along* demonstrative *and built upon* self-evident Principles: *Therefore I resolved throughly to examine them, that I might discover (if I could) upon what*

*ſo firm and ſolid Foundations this* High *and* Mighty *Confidence was built.*

*But before I had entred upon this undertaking, I met with a* Letter *from the Author of* Sure-footing *to his* Anſwerer, *directing him how he ought to demean himſelf in his Anſwer. In which* Letter, *though there be many things liable to great exception, yet becauſe I am unwilling to be diverted from the main* Queſtion, *I ſhall not argue with him about any of thoſe matters, onely take leave to uſe the ſame liberty in managing my Anſwer, which he hath aſſumed to himſelf, in preſcribing Laws to me about it: Therefore without taking any farther notice of his* Letter, *I addreſs my ſelf to his* Book.

THE

# THE RULE OF FAITH.

## PART I.

### The Explication and State of the Question.

SECT. I.

§. 1. THE Question he propounds to himself to debate, is, *What is the Rule of Faith?* In order to the Resolution whereof, he endeavours, The Explication of the Terms of the Questions.

*First*, To fix the true notion of these two Terms, *Rule*, and *Faith*. Which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reasonable; but I can by no means think his explication of those Terms to be sufficient. He tells us, That *a Rule is that which is able to regulate, or guide him that useth it:* In which description, as in many other passages of his Book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr. * *Whitby*, that is, the confounding of a *Rule* and a *Guide*, by making *Regulating* and *Guiding* to be equivalent words. But for this I am no farther concerned, than to take notice of it by the way: The fault which I find in this *definition* is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before; so that no man is the wiser for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a *Rule* is. He pretends to tell *English-men* what a *Rule* is, and for their clearer understanding of this *word*, he explains it by a *word* less remov'd from the *Latin*, *A Rule is that which is able to regulate him that useth it*; just as if a man should go about to explain what a *Law-giver* is, by saying, *he is one that hath the power of Legislation*. Of the two, he had much better have said, that a *Rule* is a thing that is able to rule him that useth it, though this be nothing but an explication of the same *word* by it self. * P. 180.

§. 2. Not much better is his explication of the term *Faith*, which he tells us *in the common sense of Mankind, is the same with Believing*. * He declar'd indeed before-hand, that he did not *intend to give rigorous School-definitions of either this or the former word*; and (to do him right) he hath not in the least swerv'd from his intention. It were to be wish'd he had prefac'd some such thing to his *Demonstrations*; for the Reader will find, that they are not one whit more *rigorous* than his *definitions*; the latter of which * P. 4

which doth very much resemble the Country-man's way of defining, who being ask'd by his neighbour what an *Invasion* was, after some study, told him very gravely, that *an Invasion* was *as if he should say an Invasion*; In like manner Mr. S. tells us that *Faith* (or which is all one, *Belief*) *is the same with believing*; which in my apprehension is but a Country-definition, unless the interposing of those solemn words [*in the common sense of mankind*] may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. *S.* says in his * *Transition* (as he calls it) where he gives the Reader an account what feats he hath done in his Book: *He will see* (says he) *I take my Rise at the meaning of the words* Rule *and* Faith; *this known, I establish my First Principles in this present matter, to be these*, viz. *A Rule is a Rule, Faith is Faith*. This is the right *self-evident method* he talks so much of, and his *Principles agree* admirably well with his *definitions*. If he had but proceeded in the same method, and added, that *A Rule of Faith is a Rule of Faith*; that *Oral Tradition is Oral Tradition*; and that to say, *Oral Tradition is the Rule of Faith*, is as much as to say, *Oral Tradition is the Rule of Faith*, the whole business had been concluded without any more ado; and I think no body would have gone about to confute him.

* P. 159.

§. 3. Rejecting then his way of Definition, as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a man a clearer notion of things, I shall endeavour to explain a little better (if I can) the meaning of these Terms.

A *Rule* (when we speak of a *Rule of Faith*) is a Metaphorical word, which in its first and proper sense being applied to *material* and *sensible* things, is the *Measure* according to which we judge of the streightness and crookedness of things. And from hence it is transferred by analogy to things *moral* or *intellectual*. *A moral Rule* is the *Measure* according to which we judge, whether a thing be *good* or *evil*; and this kind of Rule, is suitable to the Metaphor called *rectitude*, or *obliquity*. An *intellectual Rule* is the *Measure* according to which we judge whether a thing be *true* or *false*; and this is either *general*, or more *particular*. Common notions and the acknowledged Principles of Reason, are that *general Rule*, according to which we judge whether a thing be *true* or *false*. The particular Principles of every Science are the more particular Rules, according to which we judge whether things in that Science be *true* or *false*. So that the *general* notion of a *Rule* is, that it is *a measure, by the agreement or disagreement to which we judge of all things of that kind to which it belongs*.

§. 4. *Faith*, though both among sacred and prophane Writers, it be used many times more *generally*, for a perswasion or assent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a term of Art used by *Divines*, it signifies that *particular* kind of assent which is wrought in us by *Testimony* or *Authority*. So that *Divine Faith* which we are now speaking of, is an assent to a thing upon the testimony or authority of God, or, which is all one, an *assent to a truth upon Divine revelation*.

§. 5. A *Rule of Faith* is the *Measure*, according to which we judge what matter we are to assent to, as revealed to us by God, and what not. And more particularly, the *Rule of Christian Faith* is the Measure, according to which we are to judge what we ought to assent to, as the Doctrine revealed by *Christ* to the world, and what not.

§. 6. So that this Question, *What is the Rule of Christian Faith?* supposeth a Doctrine revealed by Christ to the world; and that *that* Doctrine was intelligibly and intirely delivered by Christ to his Apostles, and sufficient confirmation given to it, that this Doctrine was in the same manner published to the world by the Apostles, who likewise gave sufficient

cient evidence of the truth of it. All this is necessarily supposed in the Question: For it would be in vain to enquire whether this or that be the Rule of Christian Faith, if such a thing as the Christian Faith were not first supposed. When therefore we enquire what is the Rule of Christian Faith? the meaning of that enquiry is, by what way and means the knowledge of Christ's Doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the distance of so many Ages from the time of its first delivery: For this being known, we have the *Rule of Faith*; *that is*, a measure by which we may judge what we are to assent to, as the Doctrine of Christ, and what not. So that when any Question ariseth about any particular Proposition, whether this be part of Christ's Doctrine, we may be able by this *Rule* to resolve it.

## SECT. II.

§. 1. THE next thing to be considered is his resolution of this Question; by which we shall know what his opinion is concerning the *Rule of Faith*; for that being known, the Controversie between us will easily be stated. Mr. S's Rule of Faith.

His opinion in general is, that *oral* or *practical Tradition* (in opposition to *writing*; or any other way that can be assigned) *is the Rule of Faith*. By *oral or practical Tradition*, he means* *a delivery down from hand to hand (by words, and constant course of frequent and visible actions, conformable to those words) of the sense and faith of Forefathers.*

* P. 41.

§. 2. Now that I may bring the Controversie between us to a clear state, I am first to take a more particular view of his Opinion concerning the *Rule of Faith*, that so I may the better understand how much he attributes to Oral Tradition, and what to the Scriptures, or written Tradition. And then I am to lay down the Protestant *Rule of Faith*, that so it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The sum of what he attributes to Oral Tradition, so far as can be collected out of so obscure and confused a Discourse, may be reduced to these five Heads.

§. 3. *First*, That the Doctrine of Christian Religion was delivered by Christ to the Apostles, and by them published to the World; and that the Age which first received it from the Apostles, delivered it as they received it, without any change or corruption to their Children, and they to theirs, and so it went on solely by this way of Oral Tradition. This is the sum of his Explication of Tradition, *Disc. 5th.*

§. 4. *Secondly*, That this way alone is not only sufficient to convey this Doctrine down to all Ages certainly, and without any alteration; but it is the only possible way that can be imagined of conveying down a Doctrine securely from one Age to another. And this is the natural result of his Discourse about the *Properties* of a *Rule of Faith*: for if the true properties of a *Rule of Faith* do belong to Oral Tradition, then it is a sufficient means; and if those Properties do solely and essentially appertain to it, and are incompatible to any thing else (as he endeavours to prove) then it is impossible there should be any other way.

§. 5. *Thirdly*, That it is impossible this means should fail, or miss of its end; that is, the Doctrine of Christ being once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither cease to descend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed in its descent. This is that which his *Demonstrations* pretend to prove.

§. 6. *Fourthly*, That the infallibility of Oral Tradition, or the impossi-

bility

bility of its failing, is a first and self-evident principle. This he frequently asserts throughout his Book.

§. 7. *Fifthly*, That this way of Oral Tradition hath *de facto* in all Ages been acknowledged by Christians, as the onely way and means whereby the Doctrine of Christianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the *Consent of Authority*.

§. 8. As for the Scriptures, he grants them indeed to have been written by men divinely inspired, and to contain a Divine Doctrine, even the same which is delivered by Oral Tradition; so he tells us*, *'Tis certain the Apostles taught the same Doctrine they writ*. But then he denies it to be of any use without Oral Tradition, because neither the *letter*, nor *sense* of it, can without that be ascertain'd; so he saith in his Letter to Dr. *Casaubon* *, As *for the Scriptures (ascertaining their letter and sense, which is done by Tradition) 'tis clear they are of incomparable value; not onely for the Divine Doctrine contained in them, but also for many particular passages, whose source or first attestation not being universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by Tradition*. Where, though he give the Scriptures very good words, it is to be understood, provided they will be subordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their sense and their being intelligible and useful to Oral Tradition. For if any man shall presume to say, that this Book hath any certain sense without Oral Tradition; or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this Book which he hath endited is so written, and doth not depend upon Tradition for its sense and interpretation; then the most scurrilous language is not bad enough for the Scripture; then what are those Sacred Writings *, but *Ink variously figured in a Book* *, *unsensed Characters, waxen natur'd words, not yet sensed, nor having any certain Interpreter, but fit to be plaid upon diversly by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing*, These, with many other disgraceful terms, he very liberally bestows upon Divine Oracles; the consideration whereof, did it not minister too much horrour, would afford some comfort; for by this kind of rude usage, so familiar with him towards his adversaries, one may reasonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the Scriptures among his Friends.

* P. 117.

* P. 337.

* Append. 4th. p. 319.

* P. 68.

§. 9. And whereas he saith, *That the Scriptures have preserv'd many particular passages, which because their source or first attestation was not universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by Tradition*; this is impossible, according to his *Hypothesis*. For if neither the Scriptures letter, nor the certain sense of it as to the main body of Christian Doctrine could have been secured without Oral Tradition; that is, if we could not have known that those passages which contain the main points of Christ's Doctrine, either had been written by men divinely inspired, or what the sense of them was, but from the consonancy and agreement of those passages with the Doctrine which was orally preached by the Apostles; how can we be certain either of the letter or sense of other particular passages which must necessarily want this confirmation from Oral Tradition, because *their first attestation was not universal, nor their nature much practical?* Nay, his discourse plainly implies, that we can have no security at all either of the letter or sense of any other parts of Scripture, but only those which are coincident with the main body of Christian Doctrine, as is evident from these words *, *Tradition established, the Church is provided of a certain and infallible Rule to preserve a copy of the Scriptures Letter truely significative of Christ's sense, as far as it is coinci-*

* P. 116.

*coincident with the main body of Christian Doctrine preached at first*; because *sense writ in mens hearts by Tradition, can easily guide them to correct the alteration of the outward letter.* This I perceive plainly is the thing they would be at, they would correct the *outward letter of Scripture* by *sense written in the hearts*; and then instead of leaving out the second commandment, they would change it into a precept of *giving due worship to Images*, according to the *Council of Trent*; and a thousand other alterations they must make in the *Bible* to make it *truly significative of the sense* of their *Church*. But surely the outward letter of other passages of Scripture, which were not intended to signifie points of Faith, is equally liable to alterations; and yet the Church is not by Tradition provided of any way to correct these alterations when they happen; because Tradition doth, as this *Corollary* implies, only furnish the Church with a certain and infallible Rule of preserving a copy of the Scriptures letter, so far as it is coincident with the main body of Christian Doctrine.

§. 10. Again he tells us *, *Tradition established, the Church is provided of a certain and infallible Rule to interpret Scripture letter by, so as to arrive certainly at Christ's sense as far as the letter concerns the body of Christian Doctrine preached at first, or points requisite to salvation.* So that whatever he may attribute to Scripture for fashions sake, and to *avoid Calumny with the Vulgar*, as he says very ingenuously in his explication of the 15*th* Corollary; nevertheless 'tis plain, that according to his own *Hypothesis*, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly useless and pernicious. That 'tis altogether useless according to his *Hypothesis*, is plain; for the main body of Christian Doctrine is securely conveyed to us without it, and it can give no kind of confirmation to it, because it receives all at its confirmation from it; onely the Church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition and sense written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of Scripture which are not coincident with the main body of Christian Doctrine, we can have no certainty, either that the outward letter is true; nor if we could, can we possibly arrive at any certain sense of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious, according to his *Hypothesis*, is plain, because * *every silly and upstart Heresie fathers it self upon it*; and when men leave Tradition (as he supposeth all Hereticks do) the Scripture is the most dangerous engine that could have been invented; being to such Persons onely * *waxen natured words, not sensed nor having any certain interpreter; but fit to be play'd upon diversly by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing.* And indeed, if his *Hypothesis* were true, the Scriptures might well deserve all the contemptuous language which he useth against them; and * Mr. *White*'s comparison of *them* with *Lilly*'s *Almanack*, would not onely be pardonable, but proper; and (unless he added it out of prudence, and for the Peoples sake, whom he may think too superstitiously conceited of those Books) he might have spared that cold excuse which he makes for using this similitude, that *it was agreeable rather to the impertinency of the Objection than the dignity of the subject.* Certain it is, if these men are true to their own principles, that notwithstanding the high reverence and esteem pretended to be born by them and their Church to the Scriptures, they must heartily despise them, and wish them out of the way, and even look upon it as a great oversight of the Divine Providence to trouble his Church with a Book, which, if their discourse be of any consequence, can stand Catholicks in no stead at all, and is so dangerous and mischievous a weapon in the hands of Hereticks.

* P. 117

* Apology for Tradition, p. 165.

## SECT. III.

The Protestant Doctrin concerning the *Rule of Faith*.

§. 1. HAving thus taken a view of his opinion, and considered how much he attributes to Oral Tradition, and how little to the Scriptures; before I assail this *Hypothesis*, I shall lay down the Protestant *Rule of Faith*; not that so much is necessary for the answering of his Book, but that he may have no colour of objection, that I proceed altogether in the destructive way, and overthrow his *Principle*, as he calls it, without substituting another in its room. The opinion then of the Protestants concerning the *Rule of Faith*, is this in general, That those Books which we call the Holy Scriptures, are the means whereby the Christian Doctrine hath been brought down to us. And that he may now clearly understand this together with the grounds of it, (which in reason he ought to have done before he had forsaken us) I shall declare it more particularly in these following Propositions.

§. 2. 1. That the Doctrine of Christian Religion was by Christ delivered to the Apostles, and by them first preached to the World, and afterwards by them committed to Writing; which Writings, or Books, have been transmitted from one Age to another down to us. So far I take to be granted by our present Adversaries. That the Christian Doctrine was by Christ delivered to the Apostles, and by them publish'd to the World, is part of their own *Hypothesis*. That this Doctrine was afterwards by the Apostles committed to writing, he also grants, *Corol.* 29. * *'Tis certain the Apostles taught the same Doctrine they writ*, and if so, it must be as certain that they writ the same Doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general Tenet of the Papist, that the Scriptures do not contain the intire body of Christian Doctrine; but that besides the Doctrines contained in Scripture, there are also others brought down to us, by oral or unwritten Tradition. But Mr. *S.* who supposeth the whole Doctrine of Christian Religion to be certainly conveyed down to us solely by oral Tradition, doth not any where, that I remember, deny that all the same Doctrine is contained in the Scriptures; onely he denies the Scriptures to be a means sufficient to convey this Doctrine to us with certainty, so that we can by them be infallibly assured what is Christ's Doctrine, and what not. Nay, he seems in that passage I last cited, to grant this; in saying, that the Apostles did both teach and write the same Doctrine. I am sure Mr. *White* (whom he follows very closely throughout his whole Book) does not deny this, in his *Apology for Tradition*; * where he saith, that *it is not the Catholick position, that all its Doctrines are not contained in the Scriptures.* And that those Writings or Books which we call the Holy Scriptures, have been transmitted down to us, is unquestionable matter of fact, and granted universally by the Papists, as to all those Books which are owned by Protestants for Canonical.

* P. 117.

* P. 171.

§. 3. *Secondly*, That the way of Writing is a sufficient means to convey a Doctrine to the knowledge of those who live in times very remote from the Age of its first delivery. According to his *Hypothesis*, there is no possible way of conveying a Doctrine with certainty and security, besides that of oral Tradition; the falshood of which will sufficiently appear, when I shall have shewn, that the true properties of a Rule of Faith do agree to the Scriptures, and not to oral Tradition. In the mean time, I shall onely offer this to his consideration, that whatever can be

orally

orally delivered in plain and intelligible words, may be written in the same words; and that a writing or Book which is publick, and in every ones hand, may be conveyed down with at least as much certainty and security, and with as little danger of alteration as an oral Tradition. And if so, I understand not what can render it impossible for a Book to convey down a Doctrine to the knowledge of after-ages. Besides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended some little inconvenience in making that an essential part of his *Hypothesis*, which is contradicted by plain and constant experience: For that any kind of Doctrine may be sufficiently conveyed, by Books, to the knowledge of after-ages; provided those Books be but written intelligibly, and preserved from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both which I shall be so bold as to suppose possible) is as little doubted by the generality of mankind, as that there are Books. And surely we Christians cannot think it impossible to convey a Doctrine to posterity by Books, when we consider that God himself pitched upon this way for conveyance of the Doctrine of the Jewish Religion to after-ages; because it is not likely that so wise an Agent should pitch upon a means whereby it was impossible he should attain his end.

§. 4. *Thirdly*, That the Books of Scripture are sufficiently plain, as to all things necessary to be believed, and practised. He that denies this, ought in reason to instance in some necessary point of Faith, or matter of Practice, which is not in some place of Scripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a sufficient objection to say, * that the greatest wits among the Protestants differ about the sense of those Texts, wherein the generality of them suppose the Divinity of Christ to be plainly and clearly expressed: Because, if nothing were to be accounted sufficiently plain, but what it is impossible a great wit should be able to wrest to any other sense, not onely the Scriptures, but all other Books, and (which is worst of all to him that makes this objection) all oral Traditions would fall into uncertainty. Doth the Traditionary Church pretend that the Doctrine of Christ's Divinity is conveyed down to her by oral Tradition, more plainly than it is expressed in Scripture? I would fain know what plainer words she ever used to express this point of Faith by, than what the Scripture useth; which expresly calls him *God, the true God, God over all, blessed for evermore.* If it be said, that those who deny the Divinity of Christ have been able to evade these and all other Texts of Scripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the Church in that matter; it is easily answered, that the same Arts would equally have eluded both; but there was no reason why they should trouble themselves so much about the latter; for why should they be solicitous to wrest the definitions of *Councils*, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the Churches Authority? If those *great wits* (as he calls them) had believed the sayings of Scripture to be of no greater authority than the definitions of Councils, they would have answered texts of Scripture, as they have done the definitions of Councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another sense, but by downright denying their Authority. So that it seems that *oral* Tradition is liable to the inconvenience with the *written*, as to this particular.

* P. 38, 39.

§. 5. And of this I shall give him a plain instance in two *great wits* of their Church, the *present Pope*, and Mr. *White*; the one the *Head* of the *Traditionary Church*, as Mr. *S.* calls it; the other the great *Master* of the *Traditionary Doctrine*. These two *great wits*, the *Pope* and Mr. *White*,

notwithstanding the plainneſs of oral Tradition, and the impoſſibility of being ignorant of it, or miſtaking it, have yet been ſo unhappy as to differ about ſeveral points of Faith; inſomuch that Mr. *White* is unkindly cenſured for it at *Rome*, and perhaps here in *England* the Pope ſpeeds no better; however, the difference continues ſtill ſo wide, that Mr. *White* hath thought fit to diſobey the ſummons of his chief Paſtor, and like a prudent Man, rather to write againſt him here out of harms-way, than to venture the infallibility of plain *oral Tradition* for the *Doctrines* he maintains, againſt a *practical Tradition* which they have at *Rome* of killing Hereticks.

* P. 54. Methinks Mr. *S.* might have ſpared his brags, that he *hath evinced from clear reaſon*, * *that it is far more impoſſible to make a man not to be, than not to know what is rivetted into his ſoul by ſo oft repeated ſenſations*, (as the Chriſtian Faith is by Oral and practical Tradition) *and that it exceeds all the power of Nature (abſtracting from the caſes of madneſs, and violent diſeaſe) to blot knowledge thus fixt out of the ſoul of one ſingle Believer*; inſomuch, *that ſooner may all mankind periſh, than the regulative vertue of Tradition miſcarry; nay, ſooner may the ſinews of entire nature by overſtraining crack, and ſhe loſe all her activity and motion*, that is, *her ſelf*; *than one ſingle part of that innumerable multitude which integrate the vaſt teſtification, which we call Tradition, can poſſibly be violated*; when after he hath told us,

* P. 116. * that the City of *Rome* was bleſt with *more vigorous cauſes to imprint Chriſt's Doctrine at firſt, and recommend it to the next Age, than were found any where elſe*; and conſequently, *that the ſtream of Tradition in its ſource and firſt putting into motion, was more particularly vigorous there than in any other See*; *and that the chief Paſtor of that See hath a particular Title to Infallibility built upon Tradition, above any other Paſtor whatſoever*; *not to dilate on the particular aſſiſtances to that Biſhop, ſpringing out of his divinely conſtituted Office*; when, I ſay, after all this quaint Reaſon and rumbling Rhetorick about the infallibility of Oral Tradition, and the particular infallibility of the Biſhop of *Rome* built on Tradition; we cannot but remember, that this great *Oracle* of *oral Tradition* the *Pope*, and this great *Maſter* of it, Mr. *White*, who is ſo peculiarly skill'd in the *Rule of Faith*, have ſo manifeſtly declar'd themſelves to differ in points of Faith. For that the *Pope* and his *Congregation general* at *Rome* have condemn'd all

* Mr. *Wh. Exetaſis.* P. 9. his Books for this reaſon, becauſe * *they contain ſeveral Propoſitions manifeſtly heretical*, is a ſign that theſe two *great Wits* do not very well hit it in matters of Faith; and either that they do not both agree in the ſame *Rule of Faith*, or that one of them does not rightly underſtand it, or not follow it. And now, why may not that which Mr. *S.* unjuſtly ſays concerning the uſe of Scripture, be upon this account juſtly apply'd to the buſineſs of

* P. 39. Oral Tradition *? If we ſee two *ſuch eminent Wits* among the *Papiſts* (the *Pope*, and Mr. *White*) *making uſe of the ſelf-ſame, and as they conceive, the beſt advantages* their *Rule of Faith* gives them; *and availing themſelves the beſt they can by acquired skills, yet differ* about matters of Faith; *what certainty can we undertakingly promiſe to weaker heads, that is, to the generality* of the *Papiſts*, in whom the Governors of the Church do profeſſedly cheriſh ignorance for the increaſing of their devotion.

§. 6. *Fourthly*, We have ſufficient aſſurance that the Books of Scripture are conveyed down to us, without any material corruption or alteration. And he that denies this muſt either reject the authority of all Books, becauſe we cannot be certain whether they be the ſame now that they

were at first; or else, give some probable reason why these should be more liable to corruption than other. But any man that considers things, will easily find that it is much more improbable that these Books should have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted, in any thing material to Faith or a good Life, than any other Books in the World; whether we consider the peculiar Providence of God engaged for the preservation of them, or the peculiar circumstances of these Books. If they were written by men divinely inspired, and are of use to Christians, as is acknowledged (at least in words) on all hands; nothing is more credible, than that the same Divine Providence which took care for the publishing of them, would likewise be concerned to preserve them entire. And if we consider the peculiar circumstances of these Books, we shall find it morally impossible, that they should have been materially corrupted, because being of universal and mighty concernment, and at first diffused into many hands, and soon after translated into most languages, and most passages in them cited in Books now extant, and all these now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great assurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not suffered any material alteration, and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral Tradition, as I shall shew when I come to answer the *thing* which he calls Demonstration.

§. 7. *Fifthly*, That *de facto* the Scripture hath been acknowledged by all Christians, in former Ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of Christ hath with greatest certainty been convey'd to them. One good evidence of this is, That the Primitive Adversaries of Christian Religion did always look upon the Scripture as the standard and measure of the Christian Doctrine, and in all their writing against Christianity, took that for granted to be the Christian Faith which was contained in those Books; there having not as yet any Philosopher risen up who had demonstrated to the World, that a Doctrine could not with sufficient certainty and clearness be conveyed by writing from one age to another. But how absurd had this method of confuting Christian Religion been, if it had been then the publick profession of Christians, that the Scriptures were not the *Rule* of their Faith? How easie had it been for the Fathers, who apologized for, and defended Christian Religion, to have told them they took a wrong measure of their Doctrine; for it was not the principle of Christians, that their Faith was conveyed to them by the Scriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their Religion that way; but if they would effectually argue against it, they ought to enquire what that Doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to son, without which the Scriptures could signifie no more to them than an unknown *Cipher* without a *Key*; being of themselves, without the light of Oral Tradition, onely an heap of unintelligible words, *unsensed Characters*, and *Ink variously figured in a Book*; and therefore it was a gross mistake in them, to think they could understand the Christian Religion (like their own Philosophy) by reading of those Books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the *Fathers* might have defended their Religion; nay, they ought in all reason to have taken this course, and to have appealed from those dead senseless Books, to the *true Rule of Faith, the living voice of the Church Essential.* But doth Mr. *S.* find any thing to this purpose in the *Apologies* of the *Fathers*? If he hath discover'd any such matter, he might do well to acquaint the World with it, and make them wiser; in the mean time, I shall inform him what I have found,

that

that the Fathers never except against that method, but appeal frequently from the slanderous reports and misrepresentations which were made of their Doctrine to the Books of Scripture, as the true standard of it.

§. 8. Another *evidence* that Christians in all Ages since the Apostles times, have owned the Scriptures for the *Rule of* their *Faith*, is, That the *Fathers* in their *Homilies* did use constantly to declare to the People what they were to believe, and what they were to practise, out of the Scriptures; which had been most absurd and senseless, had they believed not the Scriptures, but something else to have been the Rule of Faith and Manners. For what could tend more to the seducing of the People from Mr. *S*'s supposed *Rule of Faith, Oral Tradition*, than to make a daily practice of declaring and confirming the Doctrines of the Christian Faith from the Scriptures? Had the ancient Fathers been right for Mr. *S*'s way, they would not have built their Doctrine upon Scripture; perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the People an occasion to grow familiar with so dangerous a Book; but rather (as their more prudent Posterity have done) would have lock'd it up from the people in an unknown Tongue, and have set open the stores of good wholsome Traditions, and instead of telling them (as they do most frequently) *thus saith the Scripture*, would onely have told them, this is *the voice of the essential Church*; *thus it hath been delivered down by hand to us, from our Forefathers.*

§. 9. I might add for a *Third evidence*, the great malice of the Enemies and Persecutors of Christianity, against this Book; and their cruel endeavours to extort it out of the hands of Christians, and destroy it out of the World, that by this means they might extirpate Christianity. For it seems they thought, that the abolishing of this Book would have been the ruine of that Religion. But (according to Mr. *S*'s opinion) their malice wanted wit; for had all the Bibles in the world been burnt, Christian Religion would nevertheless have been entirely preserv'd, and safely transmitted down to us *by sense written in mens hearts*, with the good help of Mr. *S*'s Demonstrations. Nay, their Church would have been a great gainer by it: For this Occasion and Parent of all Heresie the *Scripture*, being once out of the way, she might have had all in her own hands, and by leading the People in the safe paths of Tradition, and consequently of Science, might have made them wise enough to obey. Well, but suppose the Persecutors of Christianity mistook themselves in their design, how came the Christians in those days to be so tenacious of this Book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themselves to torments and death? And why did they look upon those who out of fear delivered up their Books, as Apostates and Renouncers of Christianity, and if they had not thought this Book to be the great instrument of their Faith and Salvation, and if it had really been of no greater consideration than Mr. *W*. and Mr. *S*. would make it; why should they be so loth to part with a few *unsens'd Characters*, *waxen natur'd words*, *to be play'd upon diversly by quirks of wit*, that is, *apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing?* Why should they value their lives at so cheap a rate as to throw them away for a few insignificant scrawls, and shed their blood for *a little Ink variously figured in a Book?* Did they not know, that the safety of Christianity did not depend upon this Book? Did no Christian then understand that, which (according to Mr. *S*.) no Christian can be ignorant of, *viz.* that not the Scripture, *but unmistakeable, and indefectible oral Tradition* was the *Rule of Faith?* Why did they not consider, that though this *Letter Rule* of Hereticks had been consum'd to ashes, yet their *Faith* would

would have lain ſafe, and *been preſerved entire* in its * *Spiritual Cauſes, Mens minds, the nobleſt pieces in Nature?* Some of them indeed did deliver up their Books, and were call'd *Traditores*, and I have ſome ground to believe, that theſe were the onely *Traditionary Chriſtians* of that time, and the reſt were Confeſſors and Martyrs for the *Letter Rule.* And if this be not evidence enough, that the Scriptures have always been acknowledged by Chriſtians for the Rule of Faith, I ſhall, when I come to examine his Teſtimonies for Tradition, (with the good leave of his *diſtinction* between *Speculators* and *Teſtifiers*) prove by moſt expreſs Teſtimony, that it was the general opinion of the Fathers, *that the Scriptures are the Rule of Chriſtian Faith*; and then, if his *demonſtration* of the infallibility of Tradition will enforce, that as *Teſtifiers* they muſt needs have ſpoke otherwiſe, who can help it?

## SECT. IV.

§. 1. HAving thus laid down the *Proteſtant Rule of Faith*; with the grounds of it; all that now remains for me to do, towards the clear and full ſtating of the Controverſie between us, is to take notice briefly, and with due limitations: How much Proteſtants allow to Oral Tradition.

1. How much the Proteſtants do allow to Oral Tradition.

*Secondly*, What thoſe things are which Mr. *S.* thinks fit to attribute to his *Rule of Faith*, which we ſee no cauſe to attribute to ours: And when this is done, any one may eaſily diſcern how far we differ.

§. 2. 1. How much Proteſtants do allow to Oral Tradition.

*Firſt*, We grant that Oral Tradition in ſome circumſtances, may be a ſufficient way of conveying a Doctrine; but withal we deny, that ſuch circumſtances are now in being. In the firſt Ages of the World, when the *credenda* or *Articles* of Religion, and the *agenda* or *Precepts* of it, were but few, and ſuch as had the evidence of Natural light; When the World was contracted into a few Families in compariſon, and the age of man ordinarily extended to ſix or ſeven hundred years; it is eaſie to imagine, how ſuch a Doctrine, in ſuch circumſtances, might have been propagated by Oral Tradition, without any great change or alterations. *Adam* lived till *Methuſelah* was above two hundred years old, *Methuſelah* lived till *Sem* was near an hundred, and *Sem* out-liv'd *Abraham*: So that this Tradition need not paſs through more than two hands, betwixt *Adam* and *Abraham.* But though this way was *ſufficient* to have preſerved Religion in the world, if men had not been wanting themſelves; yet we find it did not prove *effectual.* For through the corruption and negligence of men after the Flood, (if not before) when the world began to multiply, and the age of man was ſhortned, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was generally loſt in the world. And ſo far as appears by Scripture-Hiſtory, (the onely Record we have of thoſe times) when God called out *Abraham* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, the whole world was lapſed into Polytheiſme and Idolatry. Therefore for the greater ſecurity of Religion afterwards, when the poſterity of *Abraham* was multiplied into a great Nation, the wiſdom of God did not think fit to entruſt the Doctrine of Religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of Tradition, but committed it to writing. Now that God pitched upon this way, after the world had ſadly experienced the unſucceſsfulneſs of the other, ſeems to be a very good evidence that this was the better and more ſecure way: it being the uſual method of the Divine diſpenſations, not to go

back-

backwards, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is less perfect to that which is more. And the Apostles * reasoning concerning the two Covenants is very applicable to these two methods of conveying the Doctrine of Religion; *if the first had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second.*

* Heb. 8. 7.

§. 3. So likewise, when Christ revealed his Doctrine to the world, it was not in his life-time committed to writing; because it was entertained but by a few, who were his disciples and followers, and who so long as he continued with them had a living Oracle to teach them. After his death, the Apostles, who were to publish this Doctrine to the World, were assisted by an infallible Spirit, so as they were secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it. But when this extraordinary assistance failed, there was need of some other means to convey it to posterity, that so it might be a fixt and standing Rule of Faith and Manners to the end of the World. To this end the providence of God took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a conjecture of Protestants, but the sense of former times, I shall refer him to St. *Chrysostom*, (*Homil.* 1. *in Matth.*) who tells us, *That Christ left nothing in writing to his Apostles; but in stead thereof did promise to bestow upon them the grace of his holy Spirit, saying,* John 14. He shall bring all things to your remembrance, &c. *But because in progress of time there were many grievous miscarriages both in matter of Opinion, and also of Life and Manners; therefore it was requisite that the memory of this Doctrine should be preserved by writing.* So long then as the Apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of Oral Tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural assistance which accompanied the deliverers.

§. 4. And therefore it is no good way of Argument against the way of Tradition by writing, which he lays so much weight upon, * *That the Apostles and their Successors went not with Books in their hands to preach and deliver Christ's Doctrine, but words in their mouths; and that primitive antiquity learned their faith by another method, a long time before many of those Books were universally spread among the vulgar.* For what if there was no need of writing this Doctrine, whilst those living Oracles, the Apostles, were present with the Church? Doth it therefore follow that there was no need of it afterwards when the Apostles were dead, and that extraordinary and supernatural assistance was ceased? If the Preachers now adays could give us any such assurance, and confirm all they preach by such frequent, and publick, and unquestionable Miracles as the Apostles did; then we need not examine the Doctrines they taught by any other Rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they delivered to us. But seeing this is not the case, *that* ought in all reason to be the Rule of our Faith, which hath brought down to us the Doctrine of Christ with the greatest certainty: And this I shall prove the Scriptures to have done.

* P. 40.

§. 5. So that in those circumstances I have mentioned, *We* allow Oral Tradition to have been a sufficient way of conveying a Doctrine; but now considering the great increase of mankind, and the shortness of mans life in these latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the Apostles age down to us; and the innumerable accidents whereby, in the space of 1500 years, Oral Tradition might receive insensible alterations, so as at last to become quite another thing from what it was at first, by

by passing through many hands: in which passage, all the mistakes and corruptions which (in the several Ages through which it was transmitted) did happen, either through Ignorance, or Forgetfulness, or out of Interest and design, are necessarily derived into the last: So that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; because as it passeth along, more Errors and Corruptions are infused into it. I say, considering all this, we deny, that the Doctrine of Christian Religion could with any probable security and certainty have been conveyed down to us by the way of Oral Tradition. And therefore do reasonably believe, that God fore-seeing this, did in his wisdom so order things, that those persons who were assisted by an infallible spirit in the delivery of this Doctrine, should before they left the world commit it to writing; which was accordingly done: And by this Instrument, the Doctrine of Faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§. 6. *Secondly*, We allow, that Tradition, *Oral* and *Written*, do give us sufficient assurance that the Books of Scripture which we now have, are the very Books which were written by the Apostles and Evangelists: Nay farther, that *Oral* Tradition alone is a competent evidence in this case; but withal we deny, That Oral Tradition is therefore to be accounted the *Rule of Faith*.

The general Assurance that we have concerning Books written long ago, that they are so ancient, and were written by those whose names they bear, is a constant and uncontroll'd Tradition of this transmitted from one Age to another; partly Orally, and partly by the Testimony of other Books. Thus much is common to Scripture with other Books. But then the Scriptures have this peculiar advantage above other Books, that being of a greater and more universal concernment, they have been more common and in every bodies hands, more read and studied than any other Books in the World whatsoever; and consequently, they have a more universal and better grounded attestation. Moreover, they have not only been owned universally in all Ages by Christians (except three or four Books of them, which for some time were questioned by some Churches, but have since been generally received) but the greatest Enemies of our Religion, the Jews and Heathens, never questioned the Antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very Books which the Apostles writ. And this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any ancient Book, without a particular and immediate Revelation.

§. 7. And this Concession doth not, as Mr. *S.* supposeth, make Oral Tradition to be finally the *Rule of Faith*; for the meaning of this question, (*What is the Rule of Faith?*) is, What is the next and immediate means whereby the knowledge of Christ's Doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although Oral Tradition be the means whereby we come to know that these are the Books of Scripture, yet these Books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know what is Christ's Doctrine; and consequently, what we are to believe.

§. 8. Nor doth this Concession make Oral Tradition to be the *Rule of Faith*, by a Parity of Reason; as if because we acknowledge that Oral Tradition alone can with competent certainty transmit a Book to After-Ages, we must therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a Doctrine consisting of several Articles of Faith (nay very many as Mr. *White* acknowledges *) and many Laws and Precepts of Life: So because Oral Tradition sufficiently assures us that *this* is *Magna Charta*, and

* *Rushw.* Dial. 4. Sect. 9.

and *that* the *Statute-Book*, in which are contain'd *those Laws which it concerns every man to be skilful in*; therefore by like parity of Reason it must follow, that Tradition it self is better than a Book, even *the best way imaginable, to convey down such Laws to us*. Mr. *S.* saith * expresly it is; but how truly, I appeal to experience, and the wisdom of all Law-givers, who seem to think otherwise. Tradition is already defin'd to us, *a delivery down from hand to hand, of the sense and faith of Fore-fathers*; *i. e.* of the Gospel, or message of Christ. Now suppose any Oral message, consisting of an hundred particularities, were to be delivered to an hundred several persons of different degrees of understanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to an hundred more, who were to convey it to others, and so onwards, to a hundred descents; Is it probable this Message, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through so many mouths, as if it were written down in so many Letters, concerning which every Bearer should need to say no more than this, That it was delivered to him as a Letter written by him whose name was subscribed to it? I think it not probable, though the mens lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his Errand or Letter. For the *Letter* is a message which no man can mistake in, unless he will; but the *Errand* so difficult, and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager against every one of the Messengers, that he either forgets, or mistakes something in it; it is ten thousand to one, that the first Hundred do not all agree in it; it is a Million to one, that the next Succession do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the first Hundred mistook, or forgot any thing, it is then impossible that he that received it from him should deliver it right; and so the farther it goes, the greater change it is liable to. Yet after all this I do not say, but it may be demonstrated, in Mr. *S*'s way, to have more of certainty in it than the Original Letter.

* P. 23.

§. 9. *Thirdly*, We allow, That the Doctrine of Christian Religion hath in all Ages been preached to the People by the Pastors of the Church, and taught by Christian Parents to their Children; but with great difference; by some more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others, with less care and exactness, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in Pastors or Parents; and likewise with very different success, according to the different capacities and dispositions of the Learners. We allow likewise, That there hath been a constant course of visible actions, conformable in some measure to the Principles of Christianity; but then we say that those outward acts and circumstances of Religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by addition to them, and defalcation from them, in several Ages. That this not only is possible, but hath actually happened, I shall shew when I come to answer his Demonstrations. Now that several of the main Doctrines of Faith contained in the Scripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practised by Christians in all Ages (as the Articles summed up in the Apostles Creed, the use of the two Sacraments) is a good evidence so far, that the Scriptures contain the Doctrine of Christian Religion. But then if we consider, how we come to know that such points of Faith have been taught, and such external Actions practised in all Ages, it is not enough to say, there is a present multitude of Christians that profess to have received such Doctrines as ever believed and practised, and from hence to infer that they were so; the inconsequence of which Argument, I shall have a better occasion to

shew afterwards: But he that will prove this to any mans satisfaction, must make it evident from the best Monuments and Records of several Ages, that is, from the most Authentick Books of those times, that such Doctrines have in all those Ages been constantly and universally taught and practised. But then if from those Records of former times it appear, that other Doctrines, not contained in the Scriptures, were not taught and practised universally in all Ages, but have crept in by degrees, some in one Age, and some in another, according as Ignorance and Superstition in the People, Ambition and Interest in the chief Pastors of the Church, have ministred occasion and opportunity; and that the Innovators of these Doctrines and Practices, have all along pretended to confirm them out of Scripture, as the acknowledged *Rule of Faith*; and have likewise acknowledged the Books of Scripture to have descended without any material corruption or alteration, (all which will sufficiently appear in the process of my Discourse) then cannot the Oral and Practical Tradition of the present Church, concerning any Doctrine, as ever believed and practised, which hath no real foundation in Scripture, be any argument against these Books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the Christian Doctrine. And to say the Scripture is to be interpreted by Oral and Practical Tradition, is no more reasonable, than it would be to interpret the ancient Books of the Law, by the present practice of it; which every one, that compares things fairly together, must acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient Law.

## SECT. V.

§. 1. 2*dly*; HOW much more he attributes to his Rule of Faith, than we think fit to attribute to ours. How much Mr. S. attributes to his Rule of Faith, more than Protestants to theirs.

1. We do not say, that it is impossible in the nature of the thing, that this Rule should fail, that is, either that these Books should cease to descend, or should be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, because there is no need we should. We believe the Providence of God will take care of them, and secure them from being either lost, or materially corrupted; yet we think it very possible, that all the Books in the World may be burnt or otherwise destroyed. All that we affirm concerning our Rule of Faith, is that it is abundantly sufficient (if men be not wanting to themselves) to convey the Christian Doctrine to all successive Ages; and we think him very unreasonable that expects that God should do more than what is abundantly enough, for the perpetuating of Christian Religion in the world.

§. 2. *Secondly*, Nor do we say, that that certainty and assurance which we have, that these Books are the same that were written by the Apostles is a *first* and *self-evident Principle*; but only that it is a truth capable of evidence sufficient, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. *S.* may, if he please, say that Traditions certainty is a first and self-evident Principle; but then he that says this, should take heed how he takes upon him to demonstrate it. *Aristotle* was so wise as never to demonstrate first Principles, for which he gives this very good reason, because they cannot be demonstrated. And most prudent men are of opinion, that a self-evident Principle, of all things in the World, should not be demonstrated, because it needs not. For to what purpose should a man write a Book to prove that which every man must assent to, without any proof, so soon as it is propounded to him? I have always

taken a ſelf-evident Principle to be ſuch a Propoſition, as having in it ſelf-ſufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing elſe. If I be herein miſtaken, I deſire Mr. *S.* to inform me better.

§. 3. So that the true ſtate of the Controverſie between us, is, Whether *Oral* and *Practical Tradition*, in oppoſition to *Writing Books*, be the only way and means whereby the Doctrine of Chriſt can with certainty and ſecurity be conveyed down to us, who live at this diſtance from the Age of Chriſt and his Apoſtles: This *He* affirms, and the *Proteſtants* deny; not only that it is the ſole means, but that it is ſufficient for the certain conveyance of this Doctrine; and withal affirm, that this Doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the Books of holy Scripture, as the proper meaſure and ſtandard of our Religion: But then they do not exclude Oral Tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain knowledge of theſe Books. Nor do they exclude the authentick Records of former Ages, nor the conſtant teaching and practice of this Doctrine, from being ſubordinate means and helps of conveying it from one Age to another. Nay, ſo far are they from excluding theſe concurrent means, that they ſuppoſe them always to have been uſed, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this Doctrine, ſo far as they have been truly ſubordinate to, and regulated by theſe ſacred Oracles, the Holy Scriptures; which, they ſay, do truly and fully contain that Doctrine which Chriſt delivered to his Apoſtles, and they preached to the world. To illuſtrate this by an inſtance; ſuppoſe there were a Controverſie now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true *Art* of *Logick* which *Ariſtotle* taught his *Scholars*; and ſome ſhould be of opinion, that the only way to know this would be by Oral Tradition from his Scholars; which we might eaſily underſtand by conſulting thoſe of the preſent Age, who learned it from thoſe who received it from them, who at laſt had it from *Ariſtotle* himſelf: But others ſhould think it the ſureſt way to ſtudy his *Organon*, a Book acknowledged by all his Scholars, to have been written by himſelf, and to contain that Doctrine which he taught them. They, who take this latter courſe, ſuppoſe the authority of Oral Tradition, for the conveying to them the knowledge of this Book; and do ſuppoſe this Doctrine to have been taught and practiſed in all Ages, and a great many Books to have been written by way of Comment and Explication of this Doctrine; and that theſe have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough ſuppoſe all this, and yet be of opinion that the trueſt meaſure and ſtandard of *Ariſtotle*'s Doctrine is his own Book; and that it would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his Book either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious ſenſe of his words, to go about to reconcile this Book with that method of diſputing which is uſed by the profeſſed *Ariſtotelians* of the preſent Age, and with all that Scholaſtick *Jargon* which Mr. *S.* learn'd at *Liſbon*, and has made him ſo great a man in the *Science of Controverſie*, as even to enable him to demonſtrate *firſt* and ſelf-evident Principles; a trick not to be learn'd out of *Ariſtotle*'s *Organon*. The Application is ſo eaſie, that I need not make it.

# THE RULE OF FAITH.

## PART II.

*Concerning the Properties of the Rule of Faith; and whether they agree solely to Oral Tradition.*

### SECT. I.

§. 1. HAving thus endeavoured to bring the Controversie between us, to its clear and true state, that so we might not quarrel in the dark, and dispute about we know not what; I come now to grapple more closely with his Book. And the main foundations of his Discourse may be reduced to these three Heads.

*First*, That the essential Properties of such a way and means, as can with certainty and security convey down to us the Doctrine of Christ, belong solely to Oral Tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his *five* first *Discourses*.

*Secondly*, That it is impossible that this way of Oral Tradition should fail. And this he pretends to prove in his *four* last *Discourses*.

*Thirdly*, That Oral Tradition hath been generally reputed by Christians in all Ages, the sole way and means of conveying down to them the Doctrine of Christ. And this he attempts to shew in his last Chapter, which he calls, *The Consent of Authority to the substance of his foregoing Discourses*. If he make good these three things, he hath acquitted himself well in his undertaking. But whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

§. 2. *First*, Whether the essential Properties of such a way and means, as can with certainty and security convey down to us the knowledge of Christ's Doctrine, belong solely to Oral Tradition?

The true way to measure the essential Properties of this or that means, is by considering its sufficiency for its end. For whatsoever is necessary to make any means sufficient for the obtaining of its end, is to be reputed an essential Property of that Means, and nothing else. Now, because the

the end we are speaking of, is the conveyance of the knowledge of Christ's Doctrine to all those who are concerned to know it, in such a manner as they may be sufficiently certain and secure that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was first delivered. From hence it appears, that the means to this end must have these two Properties. 1. It must be sufficiently plain and intelligible. 2*ly*. It must be sufficiently certain to us, *that is*, such as we may be fully satisfied concerning it that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have these two conditions, it is sufficient for its end; but if it want either of them, it must necessarily fall short of its end. For if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this Doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot be assured, that that Doctrine which it brings down to us for the Doctrine of Christ, is really such.

§. 3. I know he assigns more Properties of this Means which he calls *the Rule of Faith*; but upon examination it will appear, that they either fall in with these two, or do not at all belong to it. As,

* P. 11. *First*, That * *it must be plain and self-evident to all, as to its existence.* Nothing can be more frivolous, than to make this a Property of any thing; because whosoever enquires into the Properties of a thing is supposed to be already satisfied that the thing is.

* P. 11. *Secondly*, That it be * *evidenceable, as to its Ruling Power*, that is, as

* P. 3. he explains himself, * *that men be capable of knowing, that it deserves to be relied on as a Rule.* By which he must either understand the certainty of it; and then it falls in with the second Property I mentioned, and is the same with the sixth, which *he* lays down. Or else he means more generally, that it is the property of a Rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the Properties of a Rule. For I understand not, how a man can know that any thing deserves to be relyed on as a Rule, otherwise than by knowing it hath the properties of a Rule, *that is*, that it is sufficient for its end. But at this rate, a man may multiply the Properties of things without end, if the evidence of a thing, as to its existence, be one property; and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is such a thing, be another.

* P. 12. §. 4. *Thirdly*, That it be * *apt to settle, and justify undoubting Persons.* What he means here, by *setling undoubting Persons*, I am not able, on the sudden, to comprehend; because I understand not what unsettles a man besides doubting: for if a man be but so well satisfied about any thing, as to have no doubt concerning it, I do not easily apprehend how he can be setled better, *that is*, how his mind can be more at rest, than not to doubt. But if by *undoubting Persons*, he means those who do not doubt for the present, but afterwards may doubt, then I perceive what he means by *apt to settle undoubting Persons*, viz. *apt to settle Persons when they do doubt*, *that is*, when they are *not undoubting Persons.* As for *justifying undoubting Persons*, if he means that whosoever securely relies on this Rule ought of right to be acquitted, as acting rationally in so doing; this is plainly consequent upon the two Properties I have laid down. For, if the means of conveying Christ's Doctrine be sufficiently plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is justified in so doing, because he trusts a means which is sufficient for its end.

* P. 12. §. 5. *Fourthly*, That * it be *apt to satisfie fully the most Sceptical Dissenters, and Rational Doubters:* For its aptitude to satisfie *Rational Doubters*; that plainly follows from the sufficient certainty of it. But why it should be a necessary property of a Rule of Faith, to be apt to satisfie *the most Sceptical*

*tical Dissenter*, I can no more divine, than I can, why he should call a *Dissenter Sceptical*, which are repugnant terms: For a Sceptick is one who neither assents to any thing, nor dissents; but is in a perpetual suspense; because he looks upon every opinion, as balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability, without any inclination of the Scales either way. But if by *the most Sceptical Dissenter* he means only a Sceptick, one that doth not believe the Doctrine of Christ, nor any thing else; then would I fain know, what that is which in reason is apt fully to satisfie such a person. If any thing will, sure a Demonstration will; but there is no aptitude at all in a Demonstration, to satisfie him who doubts whether there be any such thing as a Demonstration; and likewise questions the certainty of all those Principles, from whence any conclusion can be demonstrated. And those who are *most Sceptical*, profess to doubt of all this.

§. 6. *Fifthly*, That it * be *apt to convince the most obstinate, and acute Adversary*. If the Rule be plain and certain, the most *acute Adversary* may be convinced by it if he will, *that is*, if he be not obstinate; but if he be obstinate, *that is*, such a one as will not be convinced, but will persist in his Error in despite of all evidence that can be offered him, then I must profess that I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to convince that man that will not be convinced by any reason that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any *Rule of Faith*, though never so self-evident, he might have learn'd from the same *Author*, in whom he may find his chief *Properties of the Rule of Faith*, if he had but had the patience to have consider'd his explication of them; I mean Dr. *Holden* *, who lays down the Second Property of *the Rule of Faith*, (or, as he calls it, *the means whereby we come to the knowledge of Revealed Truth*) in these words, *Another* (*viz.* condition of this Means, *&c.*) *is*, *That it be apt of its own Nature, to afford the greatest, true and rational certainty, to all men without exception, to whom the knowledge of it shall come; provided they be furnish'd with the faculty of Reason, and have their minds purified from all Passion and Lust, which do* (as he tells us *Cap.* 6.) *often hinder the most sagacious Persons from understanding the most evident and manifest Truths.* Now I suppose *obstinacy* to be the effect of *Passion* and *Lust*.

* P. 11, 12.

* Analyt. Ed. l. 1

If Mr. *S.* mean, that *the Rule of Faith* must be apt to conquer *Obstinacy*, and make men lay it aside, I cannot understand this neither; unless he mean that *the Rule of Faith* must be a *Cudgel*, which the Traditionary Church have been good at, and may use it again when occasion serves; for none but they have Title to it *upon a Church-account*, as Mr. *S.* tells us, *Corol.* 10. But setting aside *this*, I do not know any thing else that is *apt to conquer Obstinacy*: Not the clearest Reason, or the strongest Demonstration; for that I am sure is no ways fitted to combate a wilful and unreasonable humour with any probability of success. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may easily be convinc'd by experience, how unapt obstinate Persons are to be convinc'd by Reason. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the Doctrine of Christ, preached by himself and his Apostles to the obstinate *Jews*, and confirmed by multitudes of unquestionable miracles; and yet we do not find by the success of it, that it was so very apt to convince those that were obstinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherwise than by the usual and frequent success of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the Doctrine of the Gospel was ever intended for that purpose. God hath provided no remedy for the

wilful

wilful and perverse, but he hath done that which is sufficient for the satisfying and winning over of those who are teachable and willing to learn: And such a disposition supposeth a man to have laid aside both *Scepticism* and *Obstinacy*.

* P. 12. §. 7. *Sixthly*, That * it be *certain in it self.*

* P. 12. *Seventhly*, That * it be *absolutely ascertainable to us.*

These *two* are comprehended in the second Property I laid down; so that I have nothing to say against them, but that the last looks very like a contradiction, *absolutely ascertainable to us*; which is to say, *with respect to us*, *without respect to us*; for *absolutely* seems to exclude respect, and *to us* implies it.

Having thus shewn, that the seven *Properties* he mentions, are either coincident with those two I have laid down, or consequent upon them; or absurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true Properties of a *Rule of Faith* are those two which I first named, and no more.

## SECT. II.

That the Properties of a Rule of Faith belong to Scripture.

§. 1. LET us now see how he endeavours to shew, that these Properties agree solely to Oral Tradition: He tells us there are but *two Pretenders* to this *Title* of being *the Rule of Faith*, *Scripture*, and *Oral Tradition*; these *Properties* do not belong to *Scripture*, and they do to *Oral Tradition*; therefore solely to it. A very good Argument, if he can prove these *two* things, *That these two Properties do not belong to Scripture; and that they do to Oral Tradition.*

* P. 13. §. 2. In order to the proving of the *First*, that these Properties do not belong to Scripture, he premiseth this Note, * *That we cannot by the Scriptures mean the sense of them, but the Book*, that is, *such or such Characters not yet sensed, or interpreted.* But why can we not, by the Scriptures, mean the sense of them? He gives this clear and admirable reason; because the sense of Scripture, is, *the things to be known*, *and these we confess are the very points of Faith*, *of which the Rule of Faith is to ascertain us.* Which is just as if a man should reason thus: Those who say the Statute-Book can convey to them the knowledge of the Statute-Law, cannot by the Statute-Book mean the sense of it, but the Book; that is, such or such Characters not yet sensed or interpreted: Because the sense of the Statute-Book is the thing to be known; and these are the very Laws, the knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this Book; which is to say, that a Book cannot convey to a man the knowledge of any matter; because if it did, it would convey to him the thing to be known. But that he may farther see what excellent reasoning this is, I shall apply this *Paragraph* to Oral Tradition; for the Argument holds every whit as well concerning that. *To speak to them in their own language, who say that* Oral Tradition *is their Rule, we must premise this Note, that they cannot mean by* Oral Tradition, *the sense of it, that is, the things to be known; for those, they confess, are the very Points of Faith, of which the Rule of Faith is to ascertain us; when they say then, that* Oral Tradition *is the Rule of Faith, they can onely mean by* Oral Tradition, the words wherein it is delivered, *not yet sensed or interpreted, but as yet to be sensed; that is, such or such* sounds, *with their aptness to signifie to them assuredly God's mind, or ascertian them of their Faith; for abstracting from the sense, and actual signification of those words, there is nothing imaginable left but those sounds, with their aptness to signifie it.* When he hath answered

answered this Argument, he will have answered his own. In the mean while this Discourse, that he who holds the Scriptures to be the Rule of Faith, must needs by the Scriptures mean a Book void of Sense, *&c.* Because otherwise if by Scripture he should understand a Book, that hath a certain sense in it, that sense must be the Doctrine of Christ, which is the very thing that this Book is to convey to us; I say, this Discourse tends onely to prove it an absurd thing for any man, that holds Scripture the means of conveying Christ's Doctrine, to understand by the Scripture, a Book that conveys Christ's Doctrine. This being his own reason, put into plain English, I leave the Reader to judge whether it be not something short of *perfect Science and Demonstration.* Nay, if it were throughly examined, I doubt whether it would not fall short of that low pitch of Science which he speaks of in his *Preface*, where he tells us, that *the way of Science is to proceed from one piece of sense to another.*

§. 3. Having premised this, that by the Scriptures *we* must mean onely dead Characters, that have no sense under them, *He* proceeds to shew that these dead Characters have not the Properties of a Rule of Faith belonging to them. Which, although it be nothing to the purpose when he hath shewn it, yet it is very pleasant to observe, by what cross and untoward Arguments he goes about it: Of which I will give the Reader a taste, by one or two instances.

In the first place he shews, that it cannot be evident to us that *these Books were written by men divinely inspired*, because * *till the seeming contradictions in those Books are solved; which to do, is one of the most difficult tasks in the world, they cannot be concluded to be of God's enditing.* Now how is this an Argument against those, who by the Scriptures, must mean unsensed letters and characters? I had always thought contradictions had been in the *sense* of words, not in the *letters* and *characters*; but I perceive he hath a peculiar opinion, that the four and twenty letters do contradict one another. * P. 14.

The other instance shall be in his last Argument *, which is this, that the Scripture cannot be the *Rule of Faith*, because *those who are to be ruled and guided by the Scriptures letter to Faith*, cannot be *certain of the true sense of it*; which is to say, that *unsensed letters and characters* cannot be the *Rule of Faith*, because the *Rule of Faith* must have a certain sense, *that is*, must not be *unsensed letters and characters*; which in plain English amounts to thus much, unsensed letters and characters *cannot* be the *Rule of Faith, that they cannot.* * P. 1[illegible]

§. 4. And thus I might trace him through all his Properties of the *Rule of Faith*; and let the Reader see, how incomparably he demonstrates the falshood of this Protestant Tenet (as he calls it) that a senseless Book may be a *Rule of Faith.* But I am weary of pursuing him in these airy and phantastical combats, and shall leave him to fight with his own fancies, and batter down the Castles which himself hath built. Onely I think fit here to acquaint him, once for all, with a great Secret of the Protestant Doctrine, which it seems he hath hitherto been ignorant of (for I am still more confirmed in my opinion, that he forsook our Religion before he understood it) that when they say, the Scriptures are the *Rule of Faith*, or the means whereby Christ's Doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean by the Scriptures, Books written in such words as do sufficiently express the sense and meaning of Christ's Doctrine.

§. 5. And to satisfie him, that we are not absurd and unreasonable in supposing the Scriptures to be such a Book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me these four things, or shew reason to the contrary.

*First*, That whatever can be spoken in plain and intelligible words, and such as have a certain sense, may be written in the same words.

*Secondly*, That the same words are as intelligible when they are written as when they are spoken.

*Thirdly*, That God, if he please, can endite a Book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

*Fourthly*, That we have no reason to think that God affects obscurity, and envies that men should understand him, in those things which are necessary for them to know, and which must have been written to no purpose, if we cannot understand them. St. *Luke* * tells *Theophilus*, that he wrote the History of Christ to him, on purpose to give him a *certain knowledge* of those things which he writ. But how a Book which hath no *certain sense*, should give a man *certain knowledge* of things, is beyond my capacity. St. *John* * saith, that he purposely committed several of *Christ's* miracles to Writing, that men might believe on *Him*. But now had Mr. *S.* been at his elbow, he would have advised him to spare his labour, and would have given him this good reason for it; because when he had written his Book, no body would be able to find the certain sense of it without oral Tradition, and that alone would securely and intelligibly convey both the Doctrine of Christ, and the certain knowledge of those miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If these four things be but granted, I see not why, when we say that the Scriptures are the means of conveying to us Christ's Doctrine, we may not be allow'd to understand by the Scriptures, a Book which doth in plain and intelligible words express to us this Doctrine.

* Luke 1.3,4.

* Joh. 20. 31.

## SECT. III.

Mr. S.'s Exceptions against Scripture examined.

§. 1. AND now, although this might have been a sufficient Answer to his Exceptions against the Scriptures, as being incapable of the Properties of a *Rule of Faith*; because all of them suppose that which is apparently false and absurd, as granted by Protestants, *viz.* That the Scriptures are onely an heap of dead letters, and insignificant characters, without any sense under them; and that oral Tradition is that onely which gives them life and sense; Yet because several of his Exceptions pretend to shew, that the true Properties of a Rule of Faith do not at all appertain to the Scriptures; therefore I shall give particular Answers to them; and as I go along, shew that Tradition is liable to all or most of those Exceptions, and to far greater than those.

§. 2. Whereas he says, * it cannot be evident to Protestants, from their Principles, that the Books of Scripture were originally written by men divinely inspired; I will shew him that it may, and then answer the reasons of this Exception.

* P. 1[illegible].

It is evident, from an universal, constant, and uncontrolled Tradition among Christians, not onely oral, but written, and from the acknowledgment of the greatest Adversaries of our Religion, that these Books were originally written by the Apostles and Evangelists. And this is not onely a Protestant Principle, but the Principle of all mankind, *That an undoubted Tradition is sufficient evidence of the Antiquity and Author of a*

*Book*, and all the extrinsecal Argument that can ordinarily be had of a Book written long ago.

Next, it is evident that the Apostles were then divinely inspired, *that is*, secured from errour and mistake in the writing of this Doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. Because it is unreasonable to imagine that the Divine Power should so remarkably interpose for the confirmation of a Doctrine, and give so eminent an attestation to the Apostles to convince the World, that they were immediately appointed and commissioned by God, and yet not secure them from errour in the delivery of it. And that such miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible Histories as we have for any of those things which we do most firmly believe. And this is better evidence that the Apostles were men divinely inspired, than bare oral Tradition can furnish us withal. For setting aside the authentick relation of these matters in Books, it is most probable, that oral Tradition of it self, and without Books, would scarce have preserved the memory of any of those particular miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles, which are recorded in Scripture. And for the probability of this, I offer these two things to his consideration.

*First*, No man can deny that memorable persons have lived, and actions been done in the World innumerable, whereof no History now extant makes any mention.

*Secondly*, He himself will grant, that our Saviour wrought innumerable more miracles, than are recorded in Scripture. And now I challenge him to shew the single virtue of Oral Tradition, by giving an account of any of those persons, or their actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 years ago, besides those which are mentioned in Books; or to give a catalogue but of ten of those innumerable miracles wrought by our Saviour, which are not recorded by the Evangelists, with circumstances as punctual and particular as those are clothed withal. If he can do this, it will be a good evidence that Oral Tradition singly and by it self can do something; but if he cannot, 'tis as plain an evidence on the contrary, that if those actions of former times, and those miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles, which are recorded in Books had never been written, but entrusted solely to Oral Tradition, we should have heard as little of them at this day, as we do of those that were not written.

§. 3. Now to examine his Reasons for this Exception:

*First*, He saith, * *'tis most* manifest that this cannot be made evident to the *vulgar*, that Scripture was written by men divinely inspired. This Reason is as easily answered, by saying *'tis most manifest that it can*: But besides saying so, I have shewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do most firmly and upon good grounds believe. Even the rudest of the vulgar, and those who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds that there was such a King as *William the Conqueror*; and the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this. * P. 13.

*Secondly*, He says, * this cannot be evident to the *curious and most speculative Searchers, but by so deep an inspection into the sense of Scripture, as shall discover such secrets, that Philosophy, and humane Industry, could never have arrived to.* As if we could not be assured that any thing were written by men divinely inspired, unless it were above the reach of humane understanding; and as if no man could know that this was our Saviour's Doctrine, *Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, that do ye likewise unto* * P. 13.

*them*, because every one can understand it. But if there were more mysteries in the Scriptures than there are, I hope a man might be satisfied that they were written by men divinely inspired, without a clear comprehension of all those mysteries. The evidence of the inspiration of any person doth not depend upon the plainness or sublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodness of the arguments which tend to perswade us that the person is so inspired : And the Argument that is most fit to satisfie us of that is, if he work miracles. Now I would gladly know why a learned man cannot be assured of a Miracle, *that is*, a plain sensible matter of Fact done long ago, but *by so deep an inspection into the sense of Scripture, as shall discover such secrets that Philosophy and humane Industry could never have arrived to.*

* P. 14. §. 4. *Thirdly*, Because * *all the seeming contradictions of Scripture must be solved, before we can out of the bare letter conclude the Scripture to be of God's enditing*; *to solve which literally, plainly, and satisfactorily* (he tells us) *the memory of so many particulars, which made them clearer to those of the Age in which they were written, and the matter known, must needs be so worn out by tract of time, that it is one of the most difficult tasks in the World.* As if we could not believe a Book to be of God's enditing, because there seem now to be some contradictions in it, which we have reason to believe could easily have been solved by those who lived in the Age in which it was written. Or as if Oral Tradition could help a man to solve these contradictions, when the memory of particulars necessary for the clear solution of them is (as himself confesses) worn out by tract of time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the solution of the seeming contradictions of Scripture, *demonstrate*, that Oral Tradition hath to this day preserved the memory of those particulars (necessary for that purpose) the memory of which must needs be long since worn out by tract of time, then I will readily yield, that his Rule of Faith hath in this particular, the advantage of *ours*. But if he cannot do this, why does he make that an Argument against *our* Rule, which is as strong against *his own*? This is just like Capt. *Everard*'s Friend's way of arguing against the *Protestants*, That they cannot rely upon Scripture because it is full of plain contradictions, impossible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reason to submit to the infallibility of the Church. And for an instance of such a contradiction, he pitched upon the three *fourteen Generations* mentioned in the first of St. *Matthew*, because the third *Series* of Generations, if they be counted, will be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now, how this difficulty hath been sufficiently satisfied both by Protestant and Popish Commentators, without any recourse to *Oral Tradition*; that which I take notice of, is the unreasonableness of making this an Exception against the Protestants, when it comes with every whit as much force upon themselves. Suppose this Contradiction not capable of any solution by Protestants (as he affirms) and I should submit to the infallibility of the Church; can he assure me, that infallibility can make Thirteen, Fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer satisfaction in this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of the Church? The case is the very same, as to Mr. S's Exception, if I owned Oral Tradition, I should be never the nearer solving the seeming contradictions of Scripture, and consequently I could not in *Reason conclude it to be of God's enditing*. So that in truth, these exceptions if they were true, would not strike at Protestancy, but at Christian Religion; which is the general unhappiness of most of the Popish Arguments; than which there is no greater evidence, that the Church of *Rome* is not the

true Mother, because she had rather Christianity should be destroyed, than it should appear that any other Church hath a claim to it. It was a work very proper for the Heretick *Marcion*, to assault Religion this way; who, as *Tertullian* * tells us, writ a whole Book, which he call'd *Antitheses*, wherein he reckoned up all the Contradictions (as he thought) between the Old and New Testament: But methinks it is very improper for the Papists, who pretend to be the onely true Christians in the World, to strain their wits to discover as many contradictions as they can in the Scripture, and to prove that there is no way of reconciling them: The natural consequence of which is, the exposing of this *sacred Instrument of our Religion*, and even *Christianity* it self, to the scorn of Atheists. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. *S.* and Captain *Everard*, I am heartily sorry to see, that one of the chief fruits of their Conversion is to abuse the Bible.

* L. [illegible] Marc. [illegible]

§. 5. *Secondly*, He says * that Protestants cannot know *how many* the Books of Scripture *ought to be*, and *which of the many controverted ones may be securely put in that Catalogue, which not:* This he proves, by saying, *'tis most palpable, that few, or at least the rude vulgar, can never be assured of it*. And if this be a good Argument, this again is a good Answer, to say it is not most palpable. But I shall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that just so many ought to be received as uncontroverted Books, concerning which, it cannot be shewn there was ever any Controversie: and so many as controverted, concerning which it appears that Question hath been made: And if those which have been controverted, have been since received by those Churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther doubt concerning them, because the Controversie about them is at an end. And now I would fain know, what greater certainty Oral Tradition can give us of the true Catalogue of the Books of Scripture. For it must either acknowledge some Books have been controverted, or not; if not, why doth he make a supposition of controverted Books? If Oral Tradition acknowledge some to have been controverted, then it cannot assure us that they have not been controverted; nor consequently, that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as such, concerning which those Churches who did once raise a Controversie about them, have been since satisfied that they are Canonical. The Traditionary Church *now*, receives the Epistle to the *Hebrews* as Canonical. I ask, Do they receive it as ever delivered for such? That they must, if they receive it from Oral Tradition, which conveys things to them under this notion, as ever delivered; and yet St. *Hierom* speaking, (not as a *Speculator*, but a *Testifier*) saith expresly of it, * *That the custom of the Latin Church doth not receive it among the Canonical Scriptures*. What saith Mr. *S.* to this? It is clear from this Testimony, that the *Roman* Church in St. *Hierom*'s time, did not acknowledge this *Epistle* for Canonical; and 'tis as plain, that the present *Roman* Church doth receive it for Canonical. Where is then the *infallibility* of *Oral Tradition*? How does the *living voice of the present Church* assure us, that what Books are now received by her were ever received by her? And if it cannot do this, but the matter must come to be tried by the best Records of former Ages, (which the Protestants are willing to have the Catalogue tried by) then it seems the Protestants have a better way to know what Books are Canonical, than is the infallible way of oral Tradition; and so long as 'tis better, no matter though it be not called Infallible.

* P. 14.

* Com. in Esai. c. [illegible] & c. 8.

§. 6. *Thirdly*,

* P. 15. §. 6. *Thirdly*, He says *, the Protestants cannot know, *that the very Original, or a perfectly true copy of these Books hath been preserved.* It is not necessary that they should know either of these, it is sufficient that they know that those copies which they have, are not materially corrupted in any matter of Faith or Practice; and that they have sufficient assurance of this, I have already shewn. And how doth he prove the contrary? By his usual Argument, with saying *it is manifestly impossible.* But how do the Church of *Rome* know that they have perfectly true copies of the Scriptures, in the Original Languages? They do not pretend to know this; the learned men of that Church acknowledge the various Readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know otherwise than by probable conjecture, (as we also may do) which of those Readings is the true one. And why should it be more necessary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reasonable to content themselves with knowing, that no material corruptions have crept into those Books, so may we. And that there have not, we know by better Arguments than oral Tradition, even by the assurance we have of God's vigilant providence; and from a moral impossibility in the thing, that a Book so universally dispersed, and translated into so many Languages, and constantly read in the Assemblies of Christians, should have been materially corrupted, so as that all those copies and translations should have agreed in those corruptions. And this reason St. *Austin* * gives of the preservation of the Scriptures entire rather than any other Book. If Mr. *S.* likes it not, he may call St. *Austin* to account for it. * Ep. 48.

* P. 15. §. 7. *Fourthly*, He says *, the Protestants, *at least the rudest vulgar*, can have no assurance *that those Books are rightly translated*, because they cannot be assured either of the ability or integrity of Translators.

* P. 16, 17. *Fifthly*, Nor *can they* (says * he) *be assured, That the Transcribers, and Printers, and Correctors* of the Press have carefully and faithfully done their part, in Transcribing and Printing the several Copies and Translations of Scripture aright: Because, *they onely can have evidence of the right letter of Scripture, who stood at their elbows attentively watching they should not err in making it perfectly like a former Copy; and even then, why might they not mistrust their own eyes and aptness to oversee?* I put these two exceptions together, because the same Answer will serve them both. The grounds of these Exceptions, if they have any, are these: That no man is to be trusted, either for his skill, or honesty. And, that it is dangerous for men to trust their own eyes. Unless both these be true, these Exceptions are of no force: For if we can be assured, that other men have sufficient skill in any thing which we our selves do not sufficiently understand, we may be assured, that those who translated the Bible had skill in the Original Languages; because very credible persons tell us so; and we have no reason to doubt their testimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that if we can have sufficient assurance of mens integrity in any thing, we have no reason to doubt of the skill of Translators, Transcribers, or Printers. And if we can have no assurance of mens integrity in any thing, then no man can be assured there was such a man as *Henry* the *Eighth*; and yet I hope the Church of *Rome* makes no doubt of it: Nor can any man be assured, there is such a City as *Rome*, who hath not seen it; nay, if he have *, *why may he not mistrust his own eyes?* and which is the saddest inconvenience of all, if no body be to be trusted, nor *mens own eyes*, (and for the same reason, sure not their *ears*) what becomes of the infallibility of *oral and practical Tradition?* which * P. 16.

necessarily

necessarily supposeth a competent understanding, a faithful memory, an honest mind, in the generality of those who delivered Christ's Doctrine down to us: And by what means soever a man can be assured of these, by the same he may much more easily be assured of the ability and integrity of Translators, Transcribers, and Printers. But above all, it supposeth that mens *ears* and *eyes* cannot deceive them in those things which they are taught, and see practised.

Is it not very pretty to see what pitiful shifts men that serve an *Hypothesis* are put to? When to maintain *Infallibility* they are forced to run to the *extremities of Scepticism*; and to defend the certainty of oral Tradition, (which depends upon the certainty of mens senses, and an assurance of the ability and integrity of those who were dead Fifteen Hundred years before we were born) are glad to take refuge in Principles quite contrary; such as these, That we can have no assurance, but that whole Professions of men * *might hap to be Knaves*; that we can have no sufficient evidence that any man made his *Copy perfectly like the former*, unless * *we stood at his elbow, attentively watching him*: Nay, and if we did so, we have still reason to distrust our senses. In short, all humane Faith supposeth honesty among men; and that for matters of fact, and plain objects of sense, the general and uncontrolled testimony of mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar skill and knowledge, that the generality of those who are accounted skilful in that kind, are to be relied upon: For, as *Aristotle* well observes, there is no greater sign of an *undisciplin'd wit* (or, to use one of Mr. *S*'s fine Phrases*, of a man *not acquainted with the paths of Science*) than to expect greater evidence for things than they are capable of. Every man hath reason to be assured of a thing which is capable of sufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence for it as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit him to have. And, as Mr. *White* says well, * *Satisfaction is to be given to every one according to his capacity; it is sufficient for a Child to believe his Parents; for a Clown to believe his Preacher.* And this is universally true in all cases, where we have not better or equal evidence to the contrary. But such is the unhappiness of the Popish Doctrines, that if people were permitted the free use of the Scripture, they would easily discern them to have no probable foundation in it, and to be plainly contrary to it; so that it cannot be safe for their Preachers to tell the people that the Scripture is the onely *Rule of Faith*, lest they should find cause not to believe them, when they teach Doctrines so plainly contrary to that Rule.

* P. 16.
* P. 16.
* Preface.
* Answ. to the Lord Falkland. P. 33.

§. 8. *Lastly*, He says*, the Protestants cannot be *certain of the true sense of Scripture*. Does he mean of plain Texts, or obscure ones? Of the true sense of plain Texts, I hope every one may be certain; and for obscure ones, it is not necessary every one should. But it may be there are no plain Texts in the Scriptures; then the reason of it must be (till Mr. *S.* can shew a better) either because it is impossible for any one to write plainly, or because God cannot write so plainly as men; or because we have good reason to think that he would not write things necessary for every one to believe, so as men might clearly understand him.

* P. 17.

But he tells us, * *The numerous comments upon Scripture* are an evidence that no man can be certain of the true sense of it. I hope not; for if those numerous Commentators do generally agree in the sense of *Plain* Texts (as 'tis certain they do) then this Argument signifies nothing as to such Texts: And as for those which are *obscure*, let Commentators

* P. 17.

differ

differ about them as much as they please, so long as all necessary Points of Faith and matters of Practice are delivered in plain Texts. He adds *, *There are infinite disputes about the sense of Scripture, even in most concerning Points, as in that of Christ's Divinity.* But are not Commentators, both Protestants and Popish, generally agreed about the sense of Scripture in that Point? And what if some out of prejudice do mistake, or out of perverseness do wrest the plainest Text of Scripture for the Divinity of Christ, to another sense? Is this any argument that those Texts are not sufficiently plain? Can any thing be spoken or written in words so clear from ambiguity, which a perverse or prejudiced mind shall not be able to vex and force to another meaning? God did not write the Scriptures for the froward and the captious, but for those who will read them with a free and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to the knowledge of the Truth. If Mr. S. had been conversant in the writings of the Fathers, he could not but have taken notice with what confidence they attempted to prove the Divinity of Christ out of Scripture, as if that did afford convincing arguments for this purpose. St. *Chrysostome* * professes to demonstrate out of Scripture, *That the Son is of the same substance with the Father*; and relies upon Scripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of Argument. So that it seems St. *Chrysostome* was not acquainted with the insufficiency of Scripture for the conviction of Hereticks in this Point; and that *he* was either ignorant of the (*infallible*) way of demonstrating this point from Oral Tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The same *Father* elsewhere *, arguing against Hereticks about the Divinity of Christ, says, *That they pervert the Scriptures, to strengthen their Heresie from thence.* But then he does not (with Mr. S.) blame the Scripture, and say that this Doctrine is not there deliver'd with sufficient clearness; but contrarywise he says, *That the Scripture is clear enough, but the corrupt minds of Hereticks will not see what is there contain'd.* Had St. *Chrysostome* been a true son of the Traditionary Church, he would have laid hold of this occasion, to vilifie the Scriptures, and to shew the necessity of regulating of our Faith not by such uncertain *Records*, but by the infallible *Reports* of Oral Tradition.

* P. 17.

* Hom. 31. de Consubstant.

* Hom. 7. de Sancta Phoca.

§. 9. But because Mr. S. lays great weight (in several parts of his Book) upon this Exception against Scripture, *viz. That Protestants cannot be certain of the true sense of it*: Therefore I shall not content my self, onely to have shewn that we may be sufficiently certain of the sense of Scripture, so far as to understand all necessary matters of Faith and Practice, and that more than this is not necessary; but shall likewise return this Exception upon him by enquiring into these two things.

1. How the Traditionary Church can be more certain of the true sense of Scripture, than the Protestants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true sense of Tradition, than Protestants of the true sense of Scripture?

1. How the *Traditionary Church* can be more certain of the true sense of Scripture, than *Protestants*? *They* pretend to have an Oral Tradition of the true sense of it, delivered down from Father to Son. But this only reacheth to those Texts, which are coincident with the main body of Christian Doctrine; as for all other parts of Scripture, they are as useless to Papists, as they suppose they are to us; because wanting the help of Oral Tradition, they cannot be certain of one tittle of them. And as for those Texts, the sense whereof is conveyed down by Oral Tradition; this sense is, I hope, delivered in some words or other; And have all Preachers,

Preachers, and Fathers, and Mothers, and Nurses, the faculty of delivering this sense in words so plain as cannot possibly be mistaken or wrested to another sense? I am sorry that when every one hath this faculty of speaking their thoughts plainly, the Holy Ghost should be represented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own Objection rebound upon himself? If the Church have a certain sense of Scripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous Comments of the Fathers upon it, and of later Writers of their Church, and the infinite Disputes about the sense of it, in the most concerning Points? *viz. The efficacy of God's grace, the Supremacy of St.* Peter, *the infallibility of a Pope and Council by immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost?* What a stir is made about the sense of *Dabo tibi Claves, Tu es Petrus, &c. super hanc Petram, &c. Pasce oves?* Do not they differ about the meaning of these Texts among themselves, as much as they do from the Fathers, and from the Protestants? Some understanding them of St. *Peter*'s Supremacy onely; others of his infallibility; others of his infallibility onely in and with a general Council; which yet others do not allow to Pope or Council, from any immediate assistance, but onely from the rational force of Tradition, supposing that the Pope and Council hold to it. If oral Tradition have brought down a certain sense of these Texts, why do they not produce it, and agree in it? If it have not (to use a hot phrase of his own*) *'tis perfect phrenzy to say they can be certain of the true sense of Scripture.* * P. 11

If he say, they are by Tradition made certain of the true sense of Scripture, *so far as it concerns the main body of Christian Doctrine*, and do all agree in it, and that is sufficient; then I ask him, What are those points of Faith which make up the body of Christian Doctrine? He will tell me, they are those which all Catholicks agree to have descended to them from the Apostles by a constant and uninterrupted Tradition. I enquire farther, how I shall know what is the certain sense of Scripture so far as it concerns these points? He must answer as before, that *that is* the true sense which all Catholicks agree to have descended to them by Tradition. Which amounts to this, that *all* Catholicks do agree in the sense of Scripture so far as they do *all* agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the Protestants (how much soever at present they differ about the sense of Scripture) may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a passage or two of Mr. *Cressy*; the one in his *Appendix* *, where he tells us, *That as it is impossible that Hereticks should agree any other way than in Faction; so it is impossible that Catholicks should differ in points of Faith.* Why so? Were not those Catholicks first, who afterwards became Hereticks; and when they became so, did they not differ in points of Belief? Yes; but here lies the conceit, when they began to differ, then they ceas'd to be Catholicks; therefore Catholicks can never differ in points of Faith. The other passage is where he says*, That he *hath forsaken a Church where Unity was impossible*, &c. *and betaken himself to a Church where Schism is impossible.* This last Clause, *That Schism is impossible in their Church*, cannot possibly be true but in the same absurd and ludicrous sense, in which it is impossible for Catholicks to differ in points of Belief. For he cannot deny, but that it is possible for men to break off from the Communion of their Church, which in his sense is Schism; but here is the subtilty of it, No Schismatick is of their Church, because so soon as he is a Schismatick he is out of it; therefore Schism is impossible in their Church. And is it not as impossi-

* Exomolog. 2d Edit. P. 554.

* Exomolog. c. 55. Sect. 2

ble in the Church of *England*? Where Mr. *Cr.* might have done well to have continued, till he could have given a wiser reason of forsaking her.

* Dial. 2. Sect. 12.

§. 10. But to return to our purpose. Mr. *Rushworth* * acknowledgeth, that the Scripture is of it self sufficiently plain, as to matters of practice; for he asks, *Who is so blind, as not to see that these things are to be found in Scripture by a sensible, common, and discreet reading of it; though perhaps by a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular word and syllable, any of these things would vanish away we know not how?* So that for the direction of our lives and actions, *he* confesseth the Scripture to be sufficiently plain, if men will but read it *sensibly* and *discreetly*; and (*he* says) that he is blind that does not see this. But who so blind as he that *will* not see, that the sense of Scripture is as plain in all necessary points of Faith? I am sure St. *Austin* makes no difference, when he tells us *, That *in those things which are plainly set down in Scripture, we may find all those things in which Faith and Manners of life are comprehended.* And why cannot men, in reference to matters of Faith as well as of Practice, read the Scriptures *sensibly* and *discreetly* without such a *rigorous balancing of every word and syllable*, as will make the sense *vanish away we know not how?* If the Scripture be but sufficiently plain to such as will use it *sensibly and discreetly*, I do not understand what greater plainness can be desir'd in a Rule: Nor can I imagine what kind of Rule it must be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious Cavillers, and such as are bent to play the fool with it.

* De Doctr. Christ. L. 2.

Well, suppose the Scripture be not sufficiently clear as to matters of Faith, and hereupon I have recourse to the Church for the true sense of Scripture, must I believe the Churches sense to be the true sense of such a Text, though I see it to be plainly contrary to the genuine sense of the words? yes, that I must, or else I make my self and not the Church judge of the sense of Scripture, which is the grand Heresie of the Protestants. But then I must not suppose, much less believe, that the Churches sense of such a Text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it; no, although I plainly see it to be so: This is hard again on the other hand; especially if that be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. *Holden*, and Mr. *Cressy*, *viz.* That though general Councils cannot mistake in the Points of Faith which they decree, yet they may mistake in the confirmation of them from Texts of Scripture, that is, they may be mistaken about the sense of those Texts. And if Mr. *S.* think his Brethren have granted too much, he may see this exemplified in the second Council of *Nice* (to mention no other) which, to establish their Doctrine of Image-worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest Texts of Scripture, that I can hardly believe that any Papist in the World hath the forehead to own that for the true sense of those Texts which is there given by those Fathers.

§. 11. *Secondly*, How the Traditionary Church can be more certain of the true sense of their Traditional Doctrines, than the Protestants can be of the true sense of Scripture? And this is worthy our enquiry, because if the business be search'd to the bottom, it will appear (besides all other inconveniencies, which oral Tradition is much more liable to than Scripture) that the certain sense and meaning of Traditional Doctrine is as hard to come at as the sense of Scripture. And this I will make appear by necessary consequence from their own Concessions. Mr. *White*, and Mr. *S.* say that the great security of Tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain phrases, and set-forms of expression, but the same sense is

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conveyed and setled in mens hearts by various expressions. But according to Mr. *Rushworth*, this renders Tradition's sense uncertain; for *he says* *, *'Tis impossible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the same sense in 'divers words.* So that if men do not receive Tradition in a *sensible, common, discreet* way, (as Mr. *Rushworth* speaks concerning reading the Scriptures) but will come to *a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phrase, word, and syllable,* the sense of Tradition will be in the very same danger of uncertainty, and be liable *to vanish we know not how.* Dr. *Holden* * lays down these two Principles First, *That no truth can be conveyed down from man to man but by speech; and speech cannot be but by words; and all words are either equivocal in themselves, or liable to be differently understood by several persons.* Secondly, *That such is the frame of man's mind, that the same truths may be differently apprehended and understood by different persons.* And if this be true, then Traditional Doctrines, if they be delivered by speech and words, will be liable to uncertainties and ambiguities as to their sense, as well as Scripture. Mr. *Cressy* * tells us, *That Reason and Experience shew, that differences will arise even about the Writings of the Fathers, and any thing but the Testimony of the present Church.* If this be true, Tradition wholly falls into uncertainty. For if difference will arise about *the Writings of the Fathers,* how they are to be interpreted, I suppose the Writings of Councils will be liable to the same inconvenience: And if the whole present Church cannot declare her sense of any Traditional Doctrine otherwise than by a Council, (unless with the Jesuits they will epitomize the Church into the Pope,) and the Decrees of a Council cannot be universally dispers'd (or at least never use to be) but by Writing: And if Differences will arise about the interpretation of *that Writing,* as well as any other; then this *present infallible Authority* (which Mr. *Cressy* magnifies so much for ending Differences) leaves all Controversies arising about the sense of Tradition, as indeterminable as ever; and they must for ever remain so, till general Councils have got the knack of penning their Decrees in words which will so infallibly express their meaning to the most captious Caviller, that no difference can possibly arise about the interpretation of them; or else (which will be more suitable to this wise *Hypothesis*) till general Councils (being convinc'd by Mr. *S*'s *Demonstrations*) shall come to understand themselves so well, as not to entrust their Decrees any more to the *uncertain* way of *Writing,* but for the future to communicate them to the World by the *infallible* way of *oral Tradition.* And to mention no more, Mr. *Knott* *, (who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain sense of Scripture is onely to be had from the Church) speaks to this purpose, That before we can be certain that this is the true sense of such a Text, we must either be certain that this Text is capable of no other sense, as *Figurative, Mystical,* or *Moral*; or if it be, we must have *some certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken, which can be known onely by revelation.* If this be true, then by a fair parity of reason, before I can be certain that this is the sense of a Doctrinal Tradition delivered down to me, I must either be certain that the words, in which this Tradition was expressed when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other sense (as Figurative, Mystical, or Moral) besides that in which I understood them; or if they be (as certainly they will be) capable of any of these other senses, then must I have some certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of these they are taken: And this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true sense of such a Text

* Dial. 2. Sect. 6.

* Analysis Fidei, l. 1. c. 9.

* Append. c. 6.

* Answer to Chillingworth, c. 2. Sect. 6.

of Scripture. If it be said, that the sense of a Traditional Doctrine may by different expressions be still farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to understand the sense of it; this will not help the matter: For if these kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words, till he can by an infallible argument demonstrate either that they cannot be taken, or that they are not taken in any other sense; I say, if this cavil will hold, then every new expression, whereby any one shall endeavour to explain any Traditional Doctrine, is liable to the same inconvenience which those words in which it was first delivered to me were liable to. From all which is evident, that the Traditionary Church can be no more certain of the sense of their Traditional Doctrines, than Protestants may be of the sense of Scripture.

§. 12. These are his Exceptions contained in his second *Discourse*; and of what force they are, hath been examined. But because he foresaw that it might be replied that these defects might in part be provided against *by History, by the Providence of God, by Testimonies of Councils and Fathers, and by the sufficient clearness of Scripture as to Fundamentals; He* endeavours to shew that these signifie little to this purpose.

* P. 17, 18. *First*, Not *History* *; *because few are skilled in History, and they that are not, cannot safely rely upon those that are skill'd unless they knew certainly that the Historians whom they rely on had secure grounds, and not bare hear-say for what they writ, and that they were not contradicted by others either extant, or perished.* How much credit is to be given to uncontrolled History by the learned, and how much by the vulgar to men of skill, I have already shewn. I shall onely add now, that if this reasoning be true, it is impossible for any man to be certain by History of any ancient matter of Fact, as *namely* that there were such persons as *Julius Cæsar*, and *William the Conqueror*, and that they invaded and conquered *England*, because (according to him) we cannot know certainly that the Historians, who relate these things, and upon whose authority we rely, *had secure grounds, and not bare hear-say for what they writ: And that they were not contradicted by others either extant or perished*, is, I am sure, impossible for any man to know: For who can tell now what was contained in those Books which are perished? So that if this be requisite to make every Historical Relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of those Books which we do not know what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no certainty of any ancient Fact or History; for who knows certainly that some Books that are perished did not contradict whatever is written in Books that are extant? Nay, if this reasoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral Tradition. For what tho' the Priest tell me this was the Doctrine of Christ delivered to him? unless I know that all others agree with him in this Tradition, I cannot rely upon his testimony: Nor then neither in Mr. *Knott's*

* Answ. to *Chilling.* c. 1. Sect. 33. * opinion, because *the testimony of Preachers or Pastors is humane and fallible*; unless (according to his *Jargon*) a *conclusion*, deduced from *Premisses*, one of which is only *probable, and may be sufficient to bring our understanding to an infallible act of Faith*, viz. *if such a conclusion be taken Specificative*; whereas, if it be taken *Reduplicative, as it is a conclusion, it can onely beget a probable assent*; which is to say, that considered barely as a conclusion, and so far as in reason it can deserve assent, it is onely probable; but considered as it serves an *Hypothesis*, and is convenient to be believed with reason or without, so it is infallible. But to carry the supposition farther, put the case, that the whole present Age assembled in a ge-

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neral Council, should declare that such a Point was delivered to them: yet (according to Mr. *S.*) we cannot safely rely upon this, unless we knew certainly, that those whom they relied on *had secure grounds, and not bare hearsay for what they delivered, and that they were not contradicted* within the space of 1500 years *by any of those that are dead*; which it is impossible for any one now to know.

But to shew how inconsistent he is with himself in these matters, I will present the Reader with *a passage* or *two* in another part of his Book; where he endeavours to prove that men may safely rely on a general and uncontrolled Tradition. He tells us*, *that a common course of humane conversation makes a madness not to believe great multitude of knowers, if no possible considerations can awaken in our reason a doubt that they conspire to deceive us.* And a little after*, *Nor can any, unless their brains rove wildly, or be unsettled even to the degree of madness, suspect deceit where such multitudes agree unanimously in a matter of Fact.* Now if men be but supposed to write, as well as to speak, what they know, and to agree in their Writings about matter of Fact; then it will be the same *madness not to believe multitudes* of Historians, *where no possible consideration can awaken in our reason a doubt that they have conspired to deceive us; and mens brains must rove wildly and be unsetled even to the degree of phrenzy, who suspect deceit where such multitudes unanimously agree in a matter of Fact.* And this seems to me to be the great unhappiness of Mr. *S*'s Demonstrations, that they proceed upon contradictory Principles; so that in order to the demonstrating of the uncertainty of Books and Writings, he must suppose all those Principles to be uncertain, which he takes to be self-evident and unquestionable when he is to demonstrate the Infallibility of Oral Tradition.

* P. 45
* Ibid

§. 13. *Secondly*, He tells us*, the *Providence of God* is no security against those contingencies the Scriptures are subject to; because we cannot be certain of Divine Providence or assistance to his Church, *but by Letter of Scripture*; therefore that must first be proved *certain, before we mention the Church, or God's assistance to her.* As if we pretended there were any promise in Scripture that God would preserve the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherwise be assured of it; as if the light of natural Reason could not assure us of God's Providence in general, and of his more especial care of those things which are of greatest concernment to us, such as this is, That a Book containing the method and the terms of salvation should be preserved from any material corruption. He might as well have said, That without the Letter of Scripture we cannot know that there is a God.

* P. 18.

§. 14. *Thirdly*, Nor (says he*) can Testimonies of *Councils and Fathers* be sufficient Interpreters of Scripture. We do not say they are. Our Principle is, that the Scripture doth sufficiently interpret it self, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things necessary to be believed and practised. And the general consent of Fathers in this doctrine of the sufficient plainness of Scripture (which I shall afterwards shew) is a good evidence against them. As for obscure and more doubtful Texts, we acknowledge the Comments of the *Fathers* to be a good help, but no certain Rule of interpretation. And that the Papists think so, as well as we, is plain; inasmuch as they acknowledge the Fathers to differ among themselves in the interpretation of several Texts: And nothing is more familiar in all Popish Commentators, than to differ from the antient Fathers about the sense of Scripture. And as for *Councils*, Dr. *Holden*, and Mr. *Cressy* (as I

* P. 18, 19

said

ſaid before) do not think it neceſſary to believe that always to be the true ſenſe of Texts which Councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm Points of Faith. Nay, if any Controverſie ariſe about the ſenſe of any Text of Scripture, it is impoſſible (according to Mr. *Ruſhworth*'s Principles) for a Council to decide either that, or any other Controverſie, for *he* * makes it his buſineſs to prove, That Controverſies cannot be *decided by words*; and if this be ſo, then they cannot be decided at all, unleſs he can prove that they may be decided *without words*, and conſequently that Councils may do their work beſt in the *Quakers* way, by *ſilent Meetings*.

* Dial. 2. Sect. 8.

§. 15. *Fourthly*, Nor can (ſays he *) the *clearneſs of Scripture as to Fundamentals*, be any help againſt theſe defects. Why not?

* P. 20, 21.

*Firſt*, Becauſe *a certain Catalogue of Fundamentals, was never given and agreed to by ſufficient Authority, and yet without this all goes to wrack.* I hope not, ſo long as we are ſure that God would make nothing neceſſary to be believed but what he hath made plain; and ſo long as men do believe all things that are plainly revealed (which is every one's fault if he do not) men may do well enough without a preciſe Catalogue. But ſuppoſe we ſay, that the Articles of the Apoſtles Creed contain all neceſſary matters of ſimple belief, what hath Mr. *S.* to ſay againſt this? I am ſure the *Roman Catechiſm*, ſet forth by the Decree of the *Council of Trent*, ſays * as much as this comes to, *viz. That the Apoſtles having received a command to preach the Goſpel to every creature, thought fit to compoſe a form of Chriſtian Faith, namely to this end, that they might all think and ſpeak the ſame things, and that there might be no Schiſms among thoſe whom they had called to the unity of Faith, but that they might all be perfect in the ſame ſenſe, and the ſame opinion: And this Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith and Hope, ſo fram'd by them, the Apoſtles called the Symbol or Creed.* Now how this end, of bringing men to unity of Faith, and making them perfectly of the ſame ſenſe and opinion, could probably be attained by means of the Creed, if it did not contain all neceſſary Points of ſimple belief, I can by no means underſtand. Beſides, a certain catalogue of Fundamentals is as neceſſary for them as for us; and when Mr. *S.* gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. *Chillingworth* had a great deſire to have ſeen Mr. *Knott*'s catalogue of Fundamentals, and challenged him to produce it, and offered him very fairly, that when ever he might with one hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own: But Mr. *Knott*, though he ſtill perſiſted in the ſame demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth his own, but kept it for a ſecret to his dying day. But to put a final ſtop to this *Canting demand of a catalogue of Fundamentals* (which yet I perceive I ſhall never be able to do, becauſe it is one of thoſe expletive Topicks which Popiſh Writers, eſpecially thoſe of the loweſt Form, do generally make uſe of to help out a Book) however to do what I can towards the ſtopping of it, I deſire Mr. *S.* to anſwer the reaſons whereby his friend Dr. *Holden* * ſhews the unreaſonableneſs of this demand, and likewiſe endeavours to prove that ſuch a *Catalogue* would not onely be *uſeleſs* and *pernicious* if it could be given, but that it is *manifeſtly impoſſible* to give ſuch a preciſe Catalogue.

* Prefat.

* Analyſ. Fid. l. 1. c. 4.

*Secondly*, He asks *, *Is it a Fundamental that Chriſt is God? If ſo, Whether this be clear in Scripture, then that God hath hands, feet,* &c. To which I anſwer by another queſtion; Is it clear that there are Figures in Scripture, and that many things are ſpoken after the manner of men, and by way of condeſcenſion and accommodation to our capacities; and that cuſtom and common ſenſe teacheth men to diſtinguiſh between things

* P. 21.

things figuratively and properly spoken? If so, why cannot every one easily understand, that when the Scripture saith *God hath hands and feet*, and that *Christ is the Vine* and *the Door*, these are not to be taken properly, as we take this Proposition, that Christ is God, in which no man hath any reason to suspect a Figure? When Mr. *S.* tells us, That *he percheth upon the specifical nature of things*, would it not offend him, if any one should be so silly as to conclude from hence that Mr. *S.* believed *himself* to be a *Bird*, and *Nature a Perch?* And yet not onely the Scriptures, but all sober Writers are free from such forc'd and phantastical Metaphors. I remember that *Origen* * taxeth *Celsus* his wilful Ignorance in finding "fault with the Scriptures, for attributing to God humane affections, as "anger, &c. and tells him, that any one who had a mind to understand "the Scriptures, might easily see, that such expressions were accommo-"dated to *us*, and accordingly to be understood; and that no man, that "will but compare these expressions with other passages of Scripture, "need to fail of the true sense of them. But (according to Mr. *S.*) *Origen* was to blame to find fault with *Celsus* for thinking that the Scripture did really attribute humane affections to God; for how could he think otherwise, when *the most fundamental Point is not clearer in Scripture, than that God hath hands, feet, &c.* How could *Origen* in reason expect from *Celsus* (though never so great a Philosopher) that he should be able, without the help of Oral Tradition, to distinguish between what is spoken *literally*, and what by a certain *Scheme* of speech? *Theodoret* * tells us of one *Audæus*, who held that God had a humane shape, and bodily members; but *he* does not say that the reason of this Error was, because he made Scripture the Rule of his Faith, but expresly because *he was a fool, and did foolishly understand those things which the Divine Scriptures speak by way of Condescension.* So that although Mr. *S.* is pleas'd to make this wise Objection, yet it seems, (according to *Theodoret*) that men do not mistake such Texts, either for want of oral Tradition, or of sufficient clearness in the Scriptures, but for want of common reason and sense. And if Mr. *S.* know of any Rule of Faith that is secure from all possibility of being mistaken by foolish and perverse men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its sake.

* L. [illegible]

* Hæret. [illegible] bul. l. 4

## SECT. IV.

§. 1. IN his next Discourse he endeavours to shew, that unlearned Persons cannot be justified as acting rationally in receiving the Scripture for the Word of God, and relying upon it as a certain Rule; because they are not capable of satisfaction concerning these matters. But I have already shewn that they are, and shall not repeat the same over again. And whereas he says *, That *several Professions all pretend to Scripture*, and yet *differ*, and *damn*, and *persecute one another* about these differences; the answer is easie: That they all pretend to Scripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the Word of God, and *the Rule of Faith*: and that they are generally agreed about the sense of those plain Texts which contain the fundamental Points of Faith is evident in that those several Professions acknowledge the Articles contained in the Apostles Creed to be sufficiently delivered in Scripture: And if any Professions differ about the meaning of plain Texts, that is not an argument that plain Texts are obscure, but that some men are perverse. And if those

That Con[illegible] [illegible] and Rati[illegible] [illegible]

* P. 2[illegible]

Pro-

Professions damn and persecute one another about the meaning of obscure Texts, the Scripture is not in fault, but those that do so.

* P. 25, 26, 27. §. 2. And whereas he pretends *, That the Scripture is not *able to satisfie Sceptical dissenters, and Rational doubters, because nothing under a demonstration can satisfie such persons so well concerning the incorruptedness of Originals, the faithfulness of Translations*, &c. *but that searching and sincere Wits may still maintain their ground of suspence with A Might it not be otherwise?* This hath been answered already: partly, by shewing that the Scripture was not intended to satisfie Scepticks, and that a Demonstration is not sufficient to give satisfaction to them; and partly, by shewing that Rational doubters may have as much satisfaction concerning those matters, as the nature of the things will bear; and he is not a Rational doubter that desires more.

But that he may see the unreasonableness of this Discourse, I shall briefly shew him, That all mankind do in matters of this nature accept of such evidence as falls short of Demonstration; and that his great *Friends* and *Masters* from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his Book (though he manageth them to less advantage) do frequently acknowledge, that it is reasonable for men to acquiesce in such assurance as falls short of Infallibility, and such evidence as is less than Demonstration. Do not mankind think themselves sufficiently assured of the Antiquity and Authors of several Books, for which they have not Demonstrative evidence? Doth not *Aristotle* say, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of Facts done long ago, are incapable of Demonstration; and that it is madness to expect it for things of this Nature? Are there no passages in Books so plain, that a man may be sufficiently satisfied that this and no other is the certain sense of them? If there be none, can any thing be *spoken* in plainer words than it may be *written*? If it cannot, how can we be satisfied of the certain sense of any Doctrine Orally delivered? And if we cannot be so satisfi'd, where's the certainty of Oral Tradition? But if Books may be written so plainly as that we may be abundantly satisfied that this is the certain sense of such and such passages; then we may reasonably rest satisfied in evidence for these matters short of Demonstration. For was ever the sense of any words so plain as that there did not remain *this ground of suspence*, that those words might be capable of another sense? Mr. *Rushworth* * says, That *disputative Scholars do find means daily to explicate the plainest words of an Author to a quite different sense*: And that the World might be furnish'd with an advantageous instance of the possibility of this, *Raynaudus* * (a writer of their own) hath made a wanton experiment upon the Apostles Creed, and by a sinister (but possible) interpretation, hath made every Article of it Heresie and Blasphemy, on purpose to shew that the plainest words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr. *S.* can out-do the Apostles, and can deliver the Christian Doctrine so clearly, that he can demonstrate it impossible for any man to put any other sense upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done, but if Mr. *S.* doeth this, he must both mend his stile, and his way of Demonstration.

* Dial. 2. Sect. 7.

* De bonis & malis Libris.

Is Mr. *S.* sufficiently assured that there is such a part of the World as *America*? and can he demonstrate this to any man, without carrying him thither? Can he shew by any necessary Argument, that it is naturally impossible that all the Relations concerning that place should be false? When his Demonstrations have done their utmost, cannot * *a searching and sincere Wit at least maintain his ground of suspence with A Might it not be otherwise?*

* P. 27.

And

And, [illegible], Is it not poſſible that all men may be Lyars, or that a company of Travellers may have made uſe of their Privilege to abuſe the World by falſe Reports, and to put a Trick upon mankind? or that all thoſe that pretend to go thither, and bring their Commodities from thence, may go to ſome other Parts of the World, and taking pleaſure in abuſing others, in the ſame manner as they have been impoſed upon themſelves, may ſay they have been at *America*? Who can tell but all this may be ſo? and yet I ſuppoſe, notwithſtanding the poſſibility of this, no man in his Wits is now poſſeſſed with ſo incredible a folly as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient Book, and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions: We have no demonſtration for theſe things, and we expect none; becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any Book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whoſe name it bears, or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch paſſages in it, it is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe; *that is*, it implies no contradiction: But we are very well aſſured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it. For a bare poſſibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the people in *France* may dye this night, but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline any man in the leaſt to think it will be ſo. It is poſſible the Sun may not riſe to morrow morning, and yet for all this I ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doubt but that it will.

§. 3. But becauſe this *Principle*, viz. *That in matters of Religion a man cannot be reaſonably ſatisfy'd with any thing leſs than that infallible aſſurance which is wrought by Demonſtration*, is the main Pillar of Mr. *S*'s Book; therefore, beſide what hath been already ſaid to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this Principle, I ſhall take a little pains to manifeſt to him how much he is contradicted in this by the chief of *his Brethren of the Tradition*, *viz.* Mr. *Ruſhworth*, Dr. *Holden*, Mr. *Creſſy*, and Mr. *White*, who beſides Mr. *S.* and one *I. B.* are (ſo far as I can learn) all the publick Patrons that ever this *Hypotheſis* of Oral Tradition hath had in the World; and if Mr. *White* (as I have reaſon to believe) was the Author of thoſe *Dialogues* which paſs under *Ruſhworth*'s name, the number of them is yet leſs. Now if I can ſhew that this *Principle* (eſteem'd by Mr. *S.* ſo fundamental to this *Hypotheſis*) is plainly contradicted by the Principal *Aſſertors* of Oral Tradition, I ſhall hereby gain one of theſe two things; either that theſe great Patrons of Oral Tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own *Hypotheſis*, or that this *Principle* is not neceſſary for the ſupport of it. Not that I would be ſo underſtood as if I deny that theſe very *Perſons* do ſometimes ſpeak very big words of the neceſſity of Infallibility: But if it be their pleaſure to contradict themſelves, as I have no reaſon to be diſpleaſed, ſo neither to be concerned for it; but ſhall leave it to Mr. *S.* to reconcile *them* firſt to *themſelves*, and then (if he pleaſes) afterwards to *himſelf*.

§. 4. I begin with Mr. *Ruſhworth* of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his to perſwade the World that notwithſtanding he was the firſt Inventer of this *Hypotheſis* of Oral Tradition, yet he could prove that the Church had in all Ages owned it, and proceeded upon it as her onely *Rule of Faith*. He in his *third Dialogue* *, when his *Nephew* objects to him, That *perhaps a Proteſtant would ſay that all* his foregoing Diſcourſe *was but Probability and likelihood, and therefore to hazard a mans Eſtate upon* Per-

* Sect. 3. & 4.

*Peradventures, were something hard, and not very rationally done.* Replies thus to him, *What security do your Merchants, your States-men, your Souldiers, those that go to Law, nay, even those that Till your grounds and work for their livings, what security, I say, do all these go upon? Is it greater than the security which these grounds afford? surely no. And yet no man esteems them foolish. All humane Affairs are hazardous, and have some adventure in them. And therefore he who requires evident certainty only in matters of Religion, discovers in himself a less mind to the Goods promised in the next life, than to these which he seeks here in this World upon weaker assurance. Howsoever, the greatest evidence that can be to him that is not capable of convincing Demonstrations (which the greatest part of Mankind fall short of) is but conjectural.* So that (according to Mr. *Rushworth*) it is not reason and discretion, but want of love to God and Religion, which makes men require greater evidence for matters of Religion than for humane Affairs, which yet (he tells us) are *hazardous, and have some adventure in them*, and consequently are not capable of Demonstration. Besides, if demonstrative evidence be an essential Property of the *Rule of Faith* (as Mr. *S.* affirms) then this Rule cannot (according to Mr. *Rushworth*) be of any use to *the greatest part of mankind*, because they are *not capable of convincing* *Ibid.Sect.6. *Demonstrations.* Again, *Do but consider* (says he *) *how unequal and unjust a condition it is, that the claim of the present Church shall not be heard, unless she can confute all the peradventures that Wit may invent, and solve all the Arguments which the infinite variety of time, place, and occasions may have given way unto; and then you will see how unreasonable an Adversary he is, who will not be content with any satisfaction, but such as mans nature scarcely affords.* And is it not equally unjust in Mr. *S.* not to let Scripture's *claim be heard, unless we can confute* every *Peradventure* [and *might it not be otherwise*] *that Wit may invent?* See then *how unreasonable an Adversary* Mr. *S.* is, *who will not be content with any satisfaction, but such as* (according to Mr. *Rushworth*) *mans nature scarcely affords.*

Dr. *Holden* (I confess) states the matter somewhat cautiously, when *L. 1. c. 1. he tells us * *That it shall suffice for present to determine, that the Wisdom of the Creator hath afforded us such an assurance, especially of Truths necessary to Salvation, as is suitable to our nature, and best fitted for the safe conduct of our lives in Moral and Religious Affairs:* But if we interpret these general expressions by the passages I before cited out of Mr. *Rushworth* (as in reason we may, since the *Doctor* is beholding to him for the best part of his Books) then nothing can make more against Mr. *S*'s *Principle.*

*C.19.Sect.5. §. 5. Mr. *Cressy* in his *Exomologesis* * says, *That such Teachers, as approached nearest to the fountain of Truth, Christ and his Apostles, had means of informing themselves in Apostolical Tradition incomparably beyond us.* Mr. *S.* may do well to shew what those means were which are so incom- *C.32.Sect.4. parably beyond his *Infallibility* and *Demonstration.* The same *Author* * does very much applaud *Stapleton*'s determination of the question concerning the Churches Infallibility, which is as follows, *That the Church does not expect to be taught by God immediately by new Revelations, but makes use of several means,* &c. *as being govern'd not by Apostles,* &c. *but by ordinary Pastors and Teachers. That these Pastors in making use of these several means of Decision, proceed not as the Apostles did, with a peculiar infallible direction of the Holy Spirit, but with a prudential collection not always necessary. That to the Apostles who were the first Masters of Evangelical Faith, and founders of the Church such an infallible certitude of means was necessary: not so now to the Church,* &c. If this be true, *That an infallible certitude*

*of*

*of me[illegible] is not now necessary to the Church*, and that her *Pastors* do now in *deciding* matters of Faith proceed onely with a prudent collection not always necessary; then it should seem that *a searching Wit may maintain his ground of suspence*, even against their Church also, with *A might it not be otherwise?* Again Mr. *Cressy* * tells us, That *truth and our obligation to believe it, is in an higher degree in Scripture, than in the Decisions of the Church, as* Bellarmine *acknowledges*: which is to say, that we may have greater assurance of the truth of Doctrines contained in the Scriptures, than we can have of any Doctrine from the determination of the Church. But if we have the greatest assurance that can be of Truths deliver'd to us by the Church, as Mr. *S.* affirms, then I would fain learn of him what that *higher degree* of assurance is which *Bellarmine* speaks of, and whether it be greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that (which yet I cannot but by the way take notice of) that Mr. *Cressy*, by his approbation of this determination of *Bellarmine*'s, doth advance the Scripture above the Church as to one of the most essential Properties of the *Rule of Faith*, *viz.* the certainty of it.

* App[illegible]

But the most eminent Testimony to my purpose in Mr. *Cressy* is that *famous passage* * (which hath given so much offence to several of his own Church) wherein he acknowledges the *unfortunateness (to him)* of the *word Infallibility*, and tells us, *That he could find no such word in any Council; That no necessity appear'd to him that either he or any other Protestant should ever have heard that word nam'd, and much less press'd with so much earnestness as of late it has generally been in Disputations and Books of Controversie*; and that Mr. *Chillingworth combats this word with too great success*, insomuch that *if this word were once forgotten or but laid by*, Mr. *Chillingworth's Arguments would lose the greatest part of their strength*; and *that if this word were confin'd to the Schools where it was bred, there would be still no inconvenience:* And *that since by manifest experience the English Protestants think themselves so secure, when they have leave to stand or fall by that word, and in very deed have so much to say for themselves when they are pressed unnecessarily with it: Since likewise it is a word capable of so high a sense that we cannot devise one more full and proper to attribute to* God *himself*, &c. Since all this is so, he thinks he cannot be *blamed*, *if such Reasons move him to wish that the Protestants may never be invited to combat the Authority of the Church under that Notion.* A very ingenuous acknowledgment, and as cross to Mr. *S*'s *Principle* as any thing can be. But the word *Infallibility* was not so *unfortunate* to Mr. *Cressy*, as his untoward Explication of the fore-cited passage, in his *Appendix* which he afterwards published chiefly by way of Vindication of himself against the *Learned Author* of the *Preface* to my Lord *Falkland*'s Discourse of *Infallibility*. There he * tells us, That *there are several degrees of Infallibility.* And that we may know what degrees of Infallibility he thinks necessary to be attributed to the Church, this following passage will inform us: *Methinks* (he says) *if God have furnished his divine and supernatural Truth, with evidence equal to this, the Sun will shine to morrow, or that there will be a Spring and Harvest next year, we are infinitely obliged to bless his Providence, and justly condemned, if we refuse to believe the least of such Truths, as shewing less affection to save our Souls, than the dull Plowmen to sow their Corn, who certainly have far less evidence for their Harvest, than Catholicks for their Faith*; and yet *they insist not peevishly upon every capricious Objection, nor exact an infallible security of a plentiful reaping next summer, but notwithstanding all difficulties and contingencies proceed chearfully in their painful Husbandry.* So that according

* [illegible] &c.

* Append. Sect. 2. & [illegible]

to this Discourse, whatever degree of assurance the Church hath, or can give to those who rely upon her, it is plain that no farther degree is necessary than what the Husbandman, when he sows, hath of a plentiful Harvest; and that men are justly condemned if they refuse to believe the least truth upon such security, which yet (by his own acknowledgment) is liable to Contingencies: Nay farther, that men are not reasonable, but *peevish*, in *exacting infallible security*, and *insisting upon every capricious Objection*, such as is Mr. *S's Might it not be otherwise?* Now as to this degree of Assurance, or (as he calls it) Infallibility, I cannot but grant what he says of it to be most true, *viz.* That *in a severe acception of the word* it is not *rigorously infallible*, that is (as he explains it) it is not *absolutely impossible*, nor does it *imply a flat contradiction* that the thing whereof we are so assured may be otherwise: But then I utterly deny that according to any true acception of this word, such a degree of Assurance as he speaks of can be called Infallibility; and withal I affirm, That none of those several degrees of Infallibility which he mentions, excepting that onely which imports an absolute impossibility, can with any tolerable propriety of speech, or regard to the true meaning and use of the word, have the name of Infallibility given to them. For Infallibility can signifie nothing else but an utter impossibility that one should be deceived in that matter as to which he is supposed to be infallible; and to say such a thing is impossible, is to say that the existence of it implies a flat contradiction. So that whosoever asserts degrees of Infallibility, is obliged to shew that there are degrees of absolute impossibilities, and of perfect contradictions, and he had need of a very sharp and piercing wit that is to find out degrees where there neither are nor can be any. Indeed, in respect of the objects of knowledge, it is easie to conceive how Infallibility may be extended to more objects or fewer; but in respect of the degree of assurance (of which Mr. *Cressy* speaks) it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or less out of *all possibility* of being deceived in those things wherein he is supposed to be infallible; for no one can be more removed from the possibility of being deceived, than he that is out of *all possibility* of being deceived, and whosoever is less than this, is not infallible; because he only is so, who is out of *all* possibility of being deceived in those matters wherein he is supposed to be infallible. So that Mr. *Cressy*'s lower degrees of Infallibility are no degrees of that assurance which may properly be called infallible (for that can have no degrees) but of that assurance which is less than infallible. And he needed not have raised all this dust about the degrees of Infallibility, had it not been that by the means of such a Cloud he might make the more convenient escape out of that strait he was in between the clamours of his own Church, and the advantage which his Adversaries made of his free and open discourse against Infallibility. For any one that carefully reads his Book, will find that he understands nothing by the Infallibility of the Church, but *an Authority of obliging all Christians to submit to her Decisions*, which is no more but what every Supreme Civil Judge hath in matters, *viz.* a power to determine those Controversies that lie before him as well as he *can* or *will*, and when that is done every one is bound to submit to such determinations; but yet for all this, no man ever dreamt a Supreme Civil Judge to be *infallible* more than another man. I do not now dispute the extent of the Churches Authority; but if she have no other Infallibility but what a full Authority of decision does suppose, I am sure she hath none at all.

Before

Before I leave Mr. *Cressy*, I cannot but take notice how *unfortunate* and disingenuous he is in explaining the meaning of these words of his own, *viz.* [*Against this word of Infallibility* Mr. Chillingworth's *Book especially combats, and this with too too great success*] which in his *Appendix* * he interprets thus, *Success, I mean, not against the Church, but against his* * C. 5. Sect. *own Soul, and the Souls of his Fellow English Protestants,* &c. As if one that had wished well to *Cæsar* should have said, *That* Pompey *had fought against him with too too great success*; and being afterwards challenged by *Cæsar*'s Party, as having said that *Pompey* had Conquered *Cæsar*, he should explain himself thus, *Success, I mean, not against* Cæsar, *but against his own life, and the lives of his followers.* Can any thing be finer than for any man to say that by *Pompey*'s *success* in fighting against *Cæsar*, he means that *Cæsar* had beaten *Pompey*? which is no more than if one should take the liberty to interpret *white* by *black*.

§. 6. Mr. *White* doth most expresly contradict this *Principle* of Mr. S's in these following passages. In his *Preface* to Mr. *Rushworth* he says, *That such a certainty as makes the cause always work the same effect, though it take not away the absolute possibility of working otherwise, ought absolutely to be reckoned in the degree of true certainty*; and that those *Authors* are *mistaken* who *undervalue it.* So that it seems Mr. *S.* is mistaken in affirming that a man cannot be certain of any thing so long as there is any possibility that it may be otherwise. In his *Answer* to my Lord *Falkland*, he says *, * P. 13. That in *moral matters, and such as are subject to humane action, we must expect such assurance as humane actions bear. If for the government of your spiritual life you have as much as for the management of your natural and civil life, what can you expect more? Two or three witnesses of men beyond exception will cast a man out of not onely his lands, but life and all. He that among Merchants will not adventure, where there is a Hundred to one of gaining, will be accounted a silly Factor. And among Souldiers, he that will not fear danger where but one of a Hundred is slain, shall not escape the stain of Cowardize. What then shall we expect in Religion, but to see a main advantage on the one side which we may rest our selves on? and for the rest, remember we are men subject to chance and mutability, and thank God he hath given us that assurance in a supernatural way, which we are contented withal in our civil ventures and possessions, which nevertheless God knoweth we often love better, and would hazard less than the unknown good of the life to come.* Again *, *If God Al-* * P. *mighty hath in all sort and manners provided his Church that she may enlighten every man in his way, that goeth the way of a man, then let every man consider which is the fit way for himself, and what in other matters of that way he accounteth evidence. And if there be no interest in his Soul to make him loth to believe, what in another matter of the like nature he doth not stick at, or heavy to practise what he sees clearly enough, I fear not his choice.* Once more; directing a man in his search after rational satisfaction in matters of Religion, he hath this passage *; *Besides this, he must have this care; that he* * P. 4. *seek what the nature of the subject can yield, and not as those Physicians, who when they have promised no less than Immortality, can at last onely reach to some conservation of health or youth in some small degree: So I could wish the Author to well assure himself first, that there is possible an Infallibility, before he be too earnest to be contented with nothing less; for what if humane nature should not be capable of so great a good? Would he therefore think it fitting to live without any Religion, because he could not get such a one as himself desired, though with more than a man's wish? Were it not rational to see, whether*

*among Religions some one have not such notable advantages over the rest, as in reason it might seem humane nature might be contented withal? Let him cast his account with the dearest things he hath, his own or friends lives, his estate, his hope of posterity, and see upon what terms of advantage he is ready to venture all these; and then return to Religion, and see whether, if he do not venture his soul upon the like, it be truly reason, or some other not confessed motive, which withdraws him. For my own part, as I doubt not of an Infallibility, so I doubt not but setting that aside, there be those Excellencies found on the Catholick party, which may force a man to prefer it, and to venture all he hath upon it, before all other Religions and Sects in the World. Why then may not one who after long searching findeth no Infallibility, rest himself on the like, supposing man's nature affords no better?*

Are not these fair Concessions, which the evidence and force of Truth have extorted from these Authors? So that it seems that *that* which Mr. *S.* calls * *a civil piece of Atheistry*, is advanced in most express words by his best Friends, and therefore I hope *he* will (as he threatens me) *be smart* with them *in opposition to so damnable and fundamental an Error:* And whenever he attempts this, I would entreat him to remember that he hath these two things to prove. *First*, That no evidence, but demonstration, can give a man sufficient assurance of any thing. *Secondly*, That a bare possibility that a thing may be otherwise, is a rational cause of doubting, and a wise ground of suspence: which when he hath proved, I shall not grudge him his Infallibility.

* Letter to his Answerer. p. 5.

## SECT. V.

That Scripture is sufficient to convince the most acute Adversaries: and that it is sufficiently certain.

§. 1. THE last part of this *Third Discourse* endeavours to shew *that the Scripture is not convictive of the most obstinate and acute Adversaries.* As for the *obstinate*, he knows my mind already. Let us see why *the most acute Adversary* may not be convinced by Scripture. Because as *he* objects*, *First*, We cannot be certain that this *Book is God's Word*, because the *many strange Absurdities and Heresies in the open letter as it lies, as that God hath hands and feet*, &c. and because *of the contradiction in it:* To which I have already returned an answer. *Secondly*, Because (as he saith*) we cannot be *certain of the Truth of the letter in any particular Text, that was not foisted in, or some way altered in its significativeness; and if it be a negative proposition, that the particle* [*not*] *was not inserted, if affirmative, not left out.* And if we pretend to be certain of this he *demands* * *our demonstration for it.* But how unreasonable this *demand* is, I hope I have sufficiently shewn. And to shew it yet farther, I ask him, How their Church knows, that the particle [*not*] was not left out of any Text in which it is now found in their Copies? I know he hath a ready answer, *viz.* by Oral Tradition. But this (according to him *) onely reaches to *Scriptures letter so far as it is coincident with the main body of Christian Doctrine;* concerning the rest of Scripture it is impossible (according to his own principles) that they should have any security that the particle [*not*] was not unduly inserted, or left out by the Transcribers. Nay, as to those Texts of Scripture which fall in with the main body of Christian Doctrine, I demand his demonstration that the particle [*not*] was not unduly inserted or left out, not onely in those Texts, but also in the Oral Tradition of the Doctrines coincident with the sense of those Texts. If he say, It was impossible any Age should conspire to leave out

* P. 28.
* P. 31.
* P. 31.
* P. 116.

or

or insert the particle [*not*] in the Oral Tradition; so say I it was that they should conspire to leave it out of the written Text: And then I differ from him thus far, That I do not think this naturally impossible, so as that it can rigorously be demonstrated, but onely morally impossible so that no body hath any reason to doubt of it; which to a prudent man is as good as a demonstration. *Pyrrho* himself never advanced any *Principle* of *Scepticism* beyond this, *viz.* That men ought to question the credit of all Books, concerning which they cannot demonstrate as to every sentence in them, that the particle [*not*] was not inserted (if it be affirmative) or left out (if it be negative.) If so much be required to free a man from reasonable doubting concerning a Book, how happy are they that have attained to Infallibility? What he saith concerning the *Variæ Lectiones* * of Scripture, hath already had a sufficient answer. * P. 32

§. 2. In his *Fourth Discourse*, he endeavours to shew *, That the Scripture *is not certain in it self*, and consequently *not ascertained to us*. First, *Not certain*, *materially considered* * *as consisting of such and such Characters*, *because Books are liable to be burnt*, *torn*, *blotted*, *worn out*. We grant, it is not impossible but that any, or all the Books in the World may be burnt: But then we say likewise, That a Book so universally dispersed may easily be preserved; though we have no assurance that God will preserve it, in case all men should be so foolish or so careless as to endeavour or suffer the abolition of it. But it seems the Scriptures cannot be a Rule of Faith if they be liable to any external accidents. And this (he tells us *) *Though it may seem a remote and impertinent Exception*, *yet to one who considers the wise dispositions of Divine Providence*, *it will deserve a deep consideration*; *because the salvation of Mankind being the end of God's making nature*, *the means to it should be more setled*, *strong*, *and unalterable*, *than any other piece of nature whatever*. But notwithstanding this wise reason, this *Exception* still seems to me both *remote* and *impertinent*. For if this which he calls a Reason be a Truth, it will from thence necessarily follow, not onely that the Doctrine of Christ must be conveyed by such a means as is more unaltered than the course of nature; but also by a clear parity of Reason, that all the means of our salvation do operate towards the accomplishing of their end with greater certainty than the fire burns, or the Sun shines, which they can never do, unless they operate more necessarily than any natural causes; how they can do so upon voluntary Agents, I desire Mr. *S.* to inform me. * P. 33. * P. 34. * P. 34.

§. 3. He proceeds by a long Harangue to shew *, That not onely these material Characters in themselves are corruptible, but *in complexion with the causes*, *actually laid in the World to preserve them entire*; *because either those causes are material*, *and then they are also liable to continual alterations*; *or spiritual*, *that is*, *the minds of men*, *and from these we may with good reason hope for a greater degree of constancy*, *than from any other piece of nature*; which by the way, is a very strange Paradox, that the actions of voluntary Agents have a greater certainty and constancy in them, than those of natural Agents; of which the fall of Angels and Men, compared with the continuance of the Sun and Stars in their first state, is a very good evidence. * P. 34

§. 4. But he adds a Caution *, *That they are perfectly unalterable from their nature*, *and unerrable*, *if due circumstances be observed*, *that is*, *if due* * P. 35

*proposals*

*proposals be made to beget certain knowledge, and due care used to attend to such proposals.* But who can warrant, That *due proposals* will always be made to men, and *dure care* used by them? If these be uncertain, where's the *constancy* and *unerrableness* he talks so much of? So that notwithstanding the constancy of this *spiritual cause* (*the mind of man*) of preserving Scrip-
P. 36. tures entire, yet in order to this (as he tells * us) *So many actions are to be done, which are compounded and made up of an innumerable multitude of several particularities to be observed, every of which may be mistaken apart, each being a distinct little action in its single self, such as the transcribing of a whole Book, consisting of such Myriads of words, single letters, and tittles or stops; and the several actions of writing over each of these so short and cursory, that it prevents diligence, and exceeds humane care, to keep awake and apply*
* Dial. 2. Sect. 7. *distinct attentions to every of these distinct actions.* Mr. *Rushworth* * much out-does Mr. *S.* in these minute Cavils, for he tells us, That *supposing an Original Copy of Christ's words, written by one of the Evangelists in the same language, let him have set down every word and syllable, yet men conversant in noting the changes of meanings in words will tell us, that divers accents in the pronunciation of them, the turning of the speakers head or body this way or that way,* &c. *may so change the sense of the words, that they will seem quite different in writing from what they were in speaking.* I hope that Oral and Practical Tradition hath been careful to preserve all these circumstances, and hath deliver'd down Christ's Doctrine with all the right *Traditionary Accents*, *Nods* and *Gestures* necessary for the understanding of it; otherwise the omission of these may have so altered the sense of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at first. But to answer Mr. *S.* We do not pretend to be assured, that it is naturally impossible that the Scriptures should have been corrupted or changed, but only to be sufficiently assured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good Arguments as the nature of the subject will bear. But if his *Reason* had not been very *short* and *cursory* he might easily have reflected, that *Oral Tradition* is equally liable to all these contingencies. For it doth as much *prevent diligence, and exceed humane care, to keep awake and apply distinct attentions to the distinct actions of speaking, as of writing.* And I hope he will not deny, that a Doctrine *Orally delivered*, consists of *words*, and *letters*, and *accents*, and *stops*, as well as a Doctrine *written*; and that the several actions of *speaking*, are as *short* and *cursory* as of *writing.*

P. 38. §. 5. *Secondly*, He tells us *, *Scripture formerly considered as to its signi-*
P. 38. *ficativeness, is also uncertain.* First, * *Because of the uncertainty of the letter.*
P. 38. This is already answered. Secondly, * *Because the certain sense of it is not to be arrived to by the Vulgar, who are destitute of Languages and Arts.* True, where men are not permitted to have the Scriptures in their own Language, and understand no other: But where they are allowed the Scriptures translated into their own Language they may understand them, all necessary points of Faith and Practice being sufficiently plain in any
* P. 38. Translations of the Bible that I know of: And that * eminent Wits cannot agree about the sense of Texts which concern the main points of Faith, hath been spoken to already.

§. 6. As for the Reverence he pretends to Scripture in the conclusion of his *Fourth Discourse*, he might have spared that, after all the raillery and rudeness he hath used against it. It is easie to conjecture, both from

his

his Principles and his uncivil Expressions concerning them, what his esteem is of those Sacred Oracles. Probably it was requisite in prudence to cast in a few good words concerning the Scriptures, for the sake of the more tender and squeamish Novices of their Religion, or (as Mr. *Rushworth*'s *Nephew* * says frankly and openly) *for the satisfaction of indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture*, who it seems are not yet attained to that degree of Catholick Piety and Fortitude, as to endure patiently that the Word of God should be reviled or slighted. Besides that, in reference to those whom they hope hereafter to convert (who might be too much alienated from their Religion, if he had expressed nothing but contempt towards a Book, which Protestants, and Christians in all Ages till the very dregs of Popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of,) it was not much amiss to pass this formal compliment upon the Bible; which the wise of his own Religion will easily understand, and may serve to catch the rest. But let him not deceive himself, *God is not mocked*.

* Dial. Sect. 14

## SECT. VI.

§. 1. *Secondly*, He comes to shew *, *That the Properties of a Rule of Faith belong to Oral Tradition*. And, *First*, He gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this *Oral Practical Tradition*, which amounts to this; That as in reference to the civil Education of Children, *they are taught their own and others names, to write and read, and exercise their Trades*: So in reference to Religion, the Children of Christians *first hear sounds, afterwards by degrees get dim notions of God, Christ, Saviour, Heaven, Hell, Vertue, Vice, and by degrees practise what they have heard; they are shewn to say Grace, and their Prayers, to hold up their hands, or perhaps eyes, and to kneel, and other postures*. Afterward they are acquainted with the *Creed, Ten Commandments, and Sacraments, some common Forms of Prayer, and other practices of Christianity, and are directed to order their lives accordingly*, and are *guided* in all this *by the actions and carriage of the elder faithful*; and *this goes on by insensible degrees, not by leaps, from a Hundred years to a Hundred, but from Month to Month, and even less*. If this be all that Tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among Protestants, and that with greater advantage; because we always teach Children to say their Prayers in a known Tongue, so as they may understand them. And we also teach them the Creed, and Ten Commandments, and the Sacraments, so many as Christ hath instituted and no more. So that if this be so infallible a way of conveying the Doctrine of Christianity, we have it among us. And we do over and besides, instruct them in the Scriptures, which are the authentick Instrument whereby Christ's Doctrine is conveyed to us. But when we do not suppose (as his *Hypothesis* necessarily enforceth him to do) that the Christian Doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by some more, by others less perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of Parents and Teachers, and the various capacities and dispositions of Children; whereas his *Hypothesis* falls, if all or at least the generality of Parents do not instruct their Children with the like exactness, and if the generality of Children do not receive this Doctrine in the same perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it must necessarily be so conveyed, and these variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us, how all Parents do teach their Children the whole Body of Christ's Doctrine, and explain to them every

* P. 41. That the Properties of a Rule of Faith do not belong to Oral Tradition.

part of it in a Hundred or a Thousand several expressions signifying the same sense, and not have instanced in two *Set-forms*, such *as the Creed*, and *Ten Commandments*; for according to Mr. *White* [*], *That cannot be a Tradition, which is delivered in set-words.*

[*] Apolog. P. 81.

§. 2. Having thus explained Oral Tradition, he comes to shew that the properties of a Rule of Faith agree to it. I have already shewed that the true Properties of a *Rule of Faith* are but *two*, viz. *That it be plain and intelligible, and that it be sufficiently certain.* The *first* of these, that Oral Tradition may deliver a Doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him. All the difficulty is about the *second* Property, whether we have sufficient assurance that the Doctrine delivered down by Oral Tradition hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance? And all that he pretends to prove in this *Discourse* is, That if this Rule hath been followed and kept to all along, the Christian Doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any change; that is, if the next Age after the Apostles did truly, and without any alteration deliver the Christian Doctrine to their immediate Successors, and they to theirs, and so on, then upon this supposition the Doctrine of the present Traditionary Church must be the very same with that which was delivered to the Apostles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this Rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impossible there should have been any deviation from it (as he pretends) this we deny, not onely as untrue, but as one of the most absurd Propositions that ever yet pretended to demonstrative evidence.

THE

# THE RULE OF FAITH.

## PART III.

*In which Mr. S's Demonstrations and Corollaries are Examined.*

### SECT. I.

§. 1. BEfore I come to speak particularly to his *Demonstrations*, I shall premise these *two Considerations*. *First*, That (according to the Principle of the Patrons of Tradition) no man can by his private Reason certainly find out the true *Rule of Faith*. *Secondly*, That (according to Mr. *S.*) the way of Demonstration is no certain way to find out the *Rule of Faith*. If either of these be made out, his Demonstrations lose all their force. If the *first* be made good, then he cannot demonstrate the Infallibility of Tradition, nor consequently that *that* is the *Rule of Faith*. If the *second*, then the way of Demonstration which he pretends to take signifies nothing. Considerations touching his Demonstrations in general.

§. 2. *First*, No man can (according to the Principles of the Patrons of Tradition) by his private Reason certainly find out what is the *Rule of Faith*. Suppose a Heathen to be desirous to inform himself of the Christian Faith; in order to which he is inquisitive after some Rule by which he may take a measure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: He enquires of Christians what their Rule is, and finds them divided about it, some saying that the Scripture, others that Oral Tradition is the Rule. In this case it is not possible (without a Revelation) for this man to find out the *Rule of Faith*, but by his own private Reason examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both sides. And when he hath done this, unless he can by his Reason demonstrate that the one is a certain and infallible Rule, and the other not so, he hath not (according to Mr. *S.*) found out the *Rule of Faith*. But Reason can never do this, according to Mr. *S.* For speaking of demonstrat-

* P. 53. ing the certainty of Tradition, *he* tells us *, *That Tradition hath for its Basis mans nature, not according to his Intellectuals, which do but darkly grope*
*Append. 2d. P. 183. *in the pursuit of Science*, &c. And again *, speaking how Reason brings men to the *Rule of Faith*, he uses this comparison, *She is like a dim-sighted man, who used his Reason to find a trusty Friend to lead him in the twilight, and then relied on his guidance rationally without using his own Reason at all about the Way it self.* So that (according to him) the certainty of Tradition cannot be founded on Demonstration, because it is not founded in the *intellectual* part of man, which only can demonstrate. Besides if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonstrate the certainty of Tradition, because that faculty which is *dim-sighted*, and does but *grope darkly in the pursuit of Science*, is uncapable of framing Demonstrations. Nor can any man understand how *dim-sighted* Reason should see clearly to chuse its guide, any more than its way, especially if it be considered what a pretty Contradiction it is, to say that Reason as it is *dim-sighted* can *see clearly*.

But Mr. *Cressy* is not contented to call every mans Reason *dim-sighted*, he ventures a step farther, and calls it *hood-winkt* and *blind* : For he tells
* Append. c. 6. Sect. 8. us *, *That private Reason is apparently a most fallible guide*; and he pities *
* Ibid. Sect. 9. my Lord *Falkland*'s case, because in the search of the true Religion he did *betake himself to the casual conduct of blind, humane, natural Reason*, which
* Ibid. Sect. 11 afterwards he calls * *a guide that two persons cannot possibly follow together, because no two persons (that ever followed any other guide beside Authority) did or could think all things to be reasonable that all others thought so*; and by consequence *such a guide that as long as he continues in that office, there cannot possibly be any Church any where : which* (says he) *is an infallible eviction that this is an imaginary seducing guide, since it is impossible that should be a guide appointed for any Christian, which neither Christ nor his Apostles, nor any of their Followers ever mentioned, yea, which formally destroys one of our twelve Articles of the Apostles Creed*, viz. *I believe the Holy Catholick Church.* Thus he does by Reason *clearly and infallibly evince*, that Reason cannot be otherwise than a most *blind and fallible guide.* This it is to talk of things when a man looks only upon one side of them; as if because Reason has *a blind side*, and is uncertain in some things, therefore we ought to conclude *universally blind* and uncertain in every thing; and as if because all men cannot think all things reasonable which any one man thinks to be so, therefore it is to be doubted whether those common Principles of Reason be true which Mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. *Cressy* speaks here of the use of our private Reason in the finding out of our Rule, is clear from what he says in the next *Section*, viz. *That this hood-wink'd guide (enquiring into Scripture, and searching after Tradition) may possibly stumble upon the way to Unity and Truth, that is, the true Catholick Church.* If this be true, why does Mr. *S.* pretend that he can by Reason demonstrate the Infallibility of Tradition, and by this *hood-wink'd guide* lead men to the true *Rule of Faith?* And what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquisitive Philosopher (who knowing no other guide but his Reason, whereby to find out whether Scripture or Tradition be the Rule) to tell him that by the help of this *hood-wink'd guide he might possibly stumble* upon the right?

A man may justly stand amazed at the inconsistency of these mens Discourses, and Principles. In one *Mood* they are all for *Demonstration*, and for convincing men *in the way of perfect Science* which is the true *Rule of Faith* : But then again when another *fit* takes them, there's no such thing

thing as Science, *humane Reason* grows all on the sudden *dim-sighted*, and at the next word is struck *stark blind*; and then the very utmost that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquisitive person to the true *Rule of Faith*, is to leave him in a *possibility of stumbling* upon it; but if he be a Heretick that makes use of private Reason for his guide, then * *it is impossible but that he with his blind guide should fall into the Pit.* I cannot for my part imagine how they can reconcile the *blindness* of humane Reason with all that noise which they make about Science and Demonstration; but this I must confess that these kind of Discourses which I meet with in Mr. *S.* and Mr. *Cressy*, are very proper Arguments to perswade a man of the blindness of humane Reason. And indeed there is one passage in Mr. *Cressy*, which gives me very great satisfaction concerning these matters, where he tells us *, That the *Wit and Judgment of Catholicks is to renounce their own Judgment, and depose their own Wit.* Now he that professes to have done this may write Contradictions, and no body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that when he forsook our Church and turned Papist, he laid aside his Judgment and Wit; which is just such an heroick act of Judgment, as if a man in a bravery to shew his liberty should sell himself for a slave. I am glad to understand from an experienced Person, what charges a man must be at when he turns *Roman Catholick*, namely, that whoever will embrace that Religion must forfeit his Reason.

* Append. [illegible]

* Ibid.

§. 3. *Secondly*, The way of Demonstration is (according to Mr. *S.*) no certain way to find out the *Rule of Faith*. In his 4th *Appendix* * against my Lord of *Down*, one of the *Eight Mines* (as he calls them) which he *lays to blow up my Lord's Disswasive against Popery*, is this, *That the method he takes in disswading cannot be held in reason to have power to disswade, unless it be proper to that effect, that is, not common to that effect and a contrary one. Now, that being most evidently no method or way to such an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect, 'tis plain to common sense, that my Lord of* Down *miscalls his Book a Disswasive, and that it can have in it no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can first vouch some particularity in the method he takes, above what's in others in which we experience miscarriage,* &c. If this be true, then his *method* of Demonstration is no *way* to make men certain of what he pretends to demonstrate, because that is *most evidently no way to an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect*; so that *'tis plain to common sense that* Mr. *S*'s Demonstrations *can have in them no power of moving the understanding one way or other, unless he can vouch some particularity* in the Demonstrations he pretends to bring, *above what is* in other pretended Demonstrations *in which we experience miscarriage.* Do not *Thomas*, and *Scotus* (as Mr. *White* tells us *) all along pretend to demonstrate? and yet it is generally believed that (at least where they contradict one another) one of them failed in his Demonstrations. Did not Mr. *Charles Thynne* pretend to have demonstrated that a man at one jump might leap from *London* to *Rome*? and yet I do not think any one was ever satisfi'd with his Demonstration. And Mr. *S.* knows one in the World (whom I will not name, because he hath since ingenuously acknowledged his Error) who thought he had demonstrated the *Quadrature of the Circle*, and was so confident of it as to venture the Reputation of his Demonstration in Divinity upon it, and some of those Divinity Demonstrati-

* P. 253. & 254.

* Exm. P. 24

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ons were the very ſame with Mr. *S*'s. Since therefore the World hath *experienced* ſo much *miſcarriages* in the way of Demonſtrations, before Mr. *S*'s Demonſtrations can be allowed to ſignifie any thing, *he muſt* (according to his own Law) *vouch ſome particularity* in his own *way* and *method* of Demonſtration above what is in other mens. He hath not any where (that I remember) told us what that *particularity* is, wherein his *way* of Demonſtration is above other mens: Nor can I upon the moſt diligent ſearch find any peculiar advantage that his *Way* has more than theirs above-mentioned; unleſs this be one that he pretends to demonſtrate a ſelf-evident Principle; and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. *Charles Thynne*; and unleſs this may be counted another advantage, that he has ſo extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own Demonſtrations, and in this particular, I muſt acknowledge that he clearly excels all that have gone before him: In all other things, his way of Demonſtrations is but like his Neighbours.

## SECT. II.

Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration *à priori*.

§. 1. I Come now to examine his *Demonſtrations* of this *ſelf-evident Principle* (as he often calls it) that Oral Tradition is a certain and infallible way of conveying Chriſt's Doctrine from one Age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to ſay, that it is impoſſible but that this Rule ſhould always have been kept to That this is not a *ſelf-evident Principle*, needs no other evidence than that he goes about to *demonſtrate* it. But yet, notwithſtanding this, I think he hath as much reaſon to call *this* a *ſelf-evident Principle*, as to call his *proofs* of it *Demonſtrations*.

* P. 59, 60.

§. 2. In order to his Demonſtration *à Priori*, he lays * theſe four *grounds*, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words. Firſt, *That Chriſtian Doctrine was at firſt unanimouſly ſettled by the Apoſtles, in the hearts of the faithful diſperſed in great multitudes over ſeveral parts of the World.* Secondly, *That this Doctrine was firmly believed by all thoſe faithful to be the way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deſerting it, to be the way to damnation: ſo that the greateſt hopes and fears imaginable were by engaging the Divine Authority ſtrongly applied to the minds of the firſt Believers, encouraging them to the adhering to that Doctrine, and detering them from relinquiſhing it; and indeed infinitely greater than any other whatever, ſpringing from any temporal conſideration: and that this was in all Ages the perſwaſion of the faithful.* Thirdly, *That hopes of good and fear of harms ſtrongly applied are the cauſes of actual will.* Fourthly, *That the thing was feaſible or within their power; that what they were bred to was knowable by them. This put, it follows as certainly that a great number or body of the firſt Believers and after faithful in each Age, that is, from Age to Age would continue to hold themſelves and teach their Children as themſelves had been taught, that is, would follow and ſtick to Tradition, as it doth, that a cauſe put actually cauſing produceth its effect.* This is his *Demonſtration* with the *grounds* of it.

§. 3. To ſhew the vanity and weakneſs of this pretended *Demonſtration*, I ſhall aſſail it theſe *three* ways; by ſhewing, *Firſt*, That if the grounds of it were true they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impoſſible which common experience evinceth, and himſelf muſt grant to have been. *Secondly*, That his main grounds are apparently falſe.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, That his Demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary.

SECT. III.

§ 1. IF the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. For if these two *Principles* be true, *That the greatest hopes and fears are strongly applied to the minds of all Christians*; *and that those hopes and fears strongly applied are the cause of actual will to adhere constantly to Christ's Doctrine*: Then from hence it follows, that none that entertain this Doctrine can ever fall from it; because falling from it is inconsistent with an actual will of adhering constantly to it. For supposing (as he doth) certain and constant causes of actual will to adhere to this Doctrine, those who entertain it must actually will to adhere to it, because *a cause put actually causing produceth its effect*, which is constant adherence to it. And if this were true these two things would be impossible. *First*, That any Christian should turn Apostate or Heretick. *Secondly*, That any Christian should live wickedly. Both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himself must grant, *de facto* to have been. The *First* answer to this Demonstration.

§. 2. *First*, It would be impossible that any Christian should turn *Apostate* or *Heretick*. *Heresie* according to him is nothing else but the *renouncing of Tradition*. Now he tells us *, *That the first Renouncers of Tradition must have been true Believers or holders of it e'r they renounced it*; and * P. 60. I suppose there is the same reason for *Apostates*. But if all Christians are true Believers (as he calls them) have these Arguments of hope and fear strongly applied; and hope and fear strongly applied be the causes of actual will to adhere to this Doctrine; 'tis necessary all Christians should adhere to it, and impossible there should be either Apostates or Hereticks. For if these causes be put in *all the faithful actually causing* (as the Grounds of his Demonstration suppose) an *indefectibleness* be *the proper and necessary effect of these causes*, as he also saith *, then it is impossible that * P. 75 where these causes are put, there should be any defection. For a proper and necessary effect cannot but be where the causes of such an effect are put; especially if they be put actually causing; and consequently 'tis impossible that any single Christian should ever either totally Apostatize or fall into Heresie, *that is*, renounce Tradition.

§. 3. And that this is a genuine consequence from these Principles (though he will not acknowledge it here, because he saw it would ruine his Demonstration) is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts of his Discourse. For he tells us *, *That it exceeds all the power of nature (abstracting from the causes of madness and violent disease) to blot the knowledge* * P. 54 *of this Doctrine out of the soul of one single Believer*, and * that *since no man* * P. 78. *can hold contrary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing it doth so, it is a manifest impossibility a whole Age should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man.* And *, That *it is perhaps impossible for one single man to attempt to deceive* * P. 89. *posterity* by renouncing Tradition. Which passages laid together amount to thus much, That it is impossible that Tradition should fail in any one single person. And though in the passage last cited he speak faintly, and

with a *perhaps*, as if he apprehended some danger in speaking too peremptorily, yet any one would easily see the *last* to be as impossible as any of the rest. And he himself elsewhere, being in the full Career of his Bombast Rhetorick, delivers it roundly without fear or wit *, *Sooner may the sinews of entire nature by overstraining crack, and she lose all her activity and motion, that is, her self, than one single part of that innumerable multitude which integrate that vast testification which we call* Tradition, *can possibly be violated.*

* P. 54.

§. 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him, and press his Demonstration too far, because he tells us he only intends by it to prove that the generality of Christians will always adhere to Tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he should then have brought a Demonstration that would have concluded no more; but this concludes of all as well as of the generality of Christians. A clear evidence that it is no Demonstration, because it concludes that which is evidently false, That there can be no Apostates or Hereticks. Besides, supposing his Demonstration to conclude onely that the generality of Christians would always adhere to Tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to History. St. *Hierom* tells us *, That *Liberius* Bishop of *Rome* (for all *his particular Title to Infallibility built upon Tradition* as Mr. *S.* speaks *Coroll.* 28.) *turned Arian.* And that * *Arianism was establish'd by the Synod of Ariminum*, which was a Council more general than that of *Trent* And that * *almost all the Churches in the whole World under the names of Peace and of the Emperor, were polluted by Communion with the Arians.* Again, That * *under the Emperor* Constantius (Eusebius *and* Hippatius *being Consuls) Infidelity was subscribed under the names of Unity and Faith.* And * *that the whole World groaned and wondered to see it self turned Arian.* And *he* * uses this as an argument to the *Luciferians*, to receive into the Church those who had been defiled with the Heresie of *Arius*, because the number of those who had kept themselves Orthodox, was exceeding small: *For* (says he) *the Synod of* Nice *which consisted of above Three hundred Bishops, received Eight Arian Bishops whom they might have cast out without any great loss to the Church; I wonder then how some, and those the followers of the Nicene Faith, can think that three Confessors (viz.* Athanasius, Hilarius, Eusebius) *ought not to do that in case of necessity for the good and safety of the whole World, which so many and such excellent Persons did voluntarily.* It seems *Arianism* had prevailed very far, when St. *Hierom* could not name above three eminent Persons in the Church who had preserved themselves untainted with it. Again *, Arius *in* Alexandria *was at first but one spark, but because it was not presently extinguish'd it broke out into a flame, which devoured the whole World. Gregory Nazianzen* * likewise tells us to the same purpose, That *the Arian Heresie seized upon the greatest part of the Church.* And, to shew that he knew nothing of Mr. *S*'s Demonstration of the indefectibility of the generality of Christians, he asks *, *Where are those that define the Church by multitude, and despise the little Flock*, &c.? And this Heresie was of a long continuance, for from its first rise, which happened in the 20th year of *Constantine*, it continued (as *Joh. Abbas* * hath calculated it) 266 years. And the *Pelagian* Heresie (if we may believe *Bradwardine*, one of the great Champions of the Church against it) did in a manner prevail as much as *Arianism*, as the said *Author* complains in his *Preface* to his *Book* *, That *almost the whole World was run after* Pelagius *into Error.* Will Mr. *S.* now say, that in the

* Chron. ad Annum Christ. 352.
* Ad An. 363.
* Ad An. 364.
* Advers. Lucifer.
* Ibid.
* Ibid.
* In Epist. ad Galat. l. 3.
* Orat. 20, & 21.
* Orat. 25.
* Chron. ad Annum octavum Maurit.
* Caus. Dei.

the height of these Heresies *the generality of Christians did firmly adhere to Tradition?* If he say they did, let him answer the express *Testimonies* produced to the contrary: But if they did not, then his Demonstration also fails as to the *generality of Christians.* And if the greater part of Christians may fall off from Tradition, what Demonstration can make it impossible for the lesser to do so? Who will say it is in Reason impossible that a *Thousand* persons should relinquish Tradition, though *Nine hundred* of them have already done it, and though the remainder be no otherwise secured from doing so than those were who have actually relinquish'd it? Now is not this a clear evidence that this which he calls a Demonstration *à Priori*, is no such thing? Because every Demonstration *à Priori*, must be from causes which are *necessary*, whereas his Demonstration is from *voluntary* causes. So that unless he can prove that *voluntary* causes are *necessary*, he shall never demonstrate that it is impossible for the generality of any company of men to err who have every one of them free-will, and are every one of them liable to passion and mistake.

§. 5. From all this it appears, that his whole *Discourse* about the Original and Progress of Heresie, and the multitudes of Hereticks in several Ages, is as clear a confutation of his own Demonstration as can be desired. The onely thing that he offers in that *Discourse*, to prevent this Objection which he foresaw it liable to, is this, *It is not* (says he *) *to be expected but that some contingencies should have place, where an whole Species in a manner is to be wrought upon; it sufficeth that the causes to preserve Faith indeficiently entire are as efficacious as those which are laid for the preservation of Mankind, the vertue of Faith not being to continue longer than Mankind its onely subject does; and they will easily appear as efficacious as the other, if we consider the strength of those causes before explicated, and reflect that they are effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themselves of those pleasures which are the causes of Mankinds propagation; and if we look into History for experience of what hath passed in the World since the propagating of Christianity, we shall find more particulars failing in propagating their kind, than their Faith.* To which I answer,

* P. 6

*First*, That it may reasonably be expected there should be no contingencies in any particulars, where causes of actual will are supposed to be put in all: *Because* (as he says truly) *a cause put actually causing cannot but produce its effect.* Suppose then constant causes laid in all Mankind of an actual will to speak Truth to the best of their knowledge, were it not reasonable to expect that there would be no such contingency to the Worlds end, as that any man should tell a lye? Nay, it were madness for any man to think any such contingency should be, supposing causes actually causing men always to speak Truth.

*Secondly*, It is far from Truth *that the causes to preserve Faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as those which are laid for the propagation of Mankind.* And whereas he would prove the strength of these causes which are laid to preserve Faith, because they are *effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themselves of those pleasures which are the causes of mankinds propagation;* I hope no body that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in their own Historians, and others of the best and most credible of their own Writers, of more than one Age, concerning the general viciousness and debauchery of their Priests and Monks, will be

over-forward to believe that all those who debar themselves of lawful Marriage, do abstain from those unlawful pleasures.

§. 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, *That if we look into Histories for experience of what hath past in the World since the first planting of Christianity, we shall find far more particulars failing in propagating their kind, than their Faith.* Do any Histories confirm it to have been the experience of the World, that the far greatest part of the World did in any Age give over propagating their kind? But Histories do confirm that the far greatest part of the Christian World did fall off to *Arianism* and *Pelagianism*; and consequently, as he supposeth, did desert and renounce Tradition. Did ever whole Nations and vast Territories of the World either wholly, or for the far greatest part of them, take up an humour against propagating Mankind? And yet both History, and the experience of the present Age assures us, that a great part of *Asia* and of *Africk* (where the most flourishing Churches in the World once were) are fallen off from *Christianity*, and become either *Mahometans* or *Heathens*. In *Africk* almost all those vast *Regions*, which Christianity had gained from Heathenism, Mahometanism hath regained from Christianity. All the North part of *Africk* lying along the *Mediterranean* (where Christianity flourish'd once as much as ever it did at *Rome*) is at this time utterly void of Christians, excepting a few Towns in the hands of the European Princes. And not to mention all particular places, the large Region of *Nubia*, which had (as is thought) from the Apostles time professed the Christian Faith, hath within these 150 years, for want of Ministers (as *Alverez* * tells us) quitted Christianity, and is partly revolted to Heathenism, partly fallen off to Mahometanism. So that it seems, that notwithstanding the *Argument of hope and fear*, the very Teachers of Tradition may fail in a largely extended Church. As for *Asia*, in the *Easterly* parts of it, there is not now one Christian to four of what there were 50 years ago; and in the more *Southerly* parts of it (where Christianity had taken deepest root) the Christians are far inferiour in number to the Idolaters and Mahometans, and do daily decrease. What thinks Mr. *S.* of all this? Have those Christian Nations which are turn'd Mahometans and Pagans failed in their Faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear Instances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

* Hist. Æthiop.

§. 7. But besides those who have totally Apostatized from Christianity, hath not the whole *Greek* Church with the *Jacobites* and *Nestorians*, and all those other *Sects* which agree with and depend upon these, and which taken together are manifoldly greater than the *Roman* Church; I say, have not all these renounced Tradition for several Ages? And here in *Europe*, hath not a great part of *Poland*, *Hungary*, both *Germanies*, *France*, and *Switzerland*; Have not the Kingdoms of *Great Britain*, *Denmark*, *Sweden*, and a considerable part of *Ireland*, in Mr. *S*'s opinion, deserted Tradition? If I should once see a whole Nation fail because no body would marry and contribute to the propagation of Mankind; and should find this sullen humour to prevail in several Nations, and to over-spread vast Parts of the World, I should then in good earnest think it possible for Mankind to fail; unless I could shew it impossible for other Nations to do that which I see some to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever *cause* he assigns of

*Here-*

*Heresie* *, as *Pride*, *Ambition*, *Lust*, or any other vice or interest, if these can take place in whole Nations, and make them renounce Tradition, then where's *the efficacy of the causes to preserve Faith indeficiently entire in any?* For the Demonstration holds as strongly for all Christians as for any. * P. 67.

§. 8. *Secondly*, From these grounds it would follow that no Christian can live wickedly; because the end of Faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear must in all Reason be as powerful and efficacious causes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his *Demonstration* proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reasoning; for he * argues in this manner, *Good is the proper object of the will, good propos'd makes the will to desire that good, and consequently the known means to obtain it: Now infinite goods and harms sufficiently proposed are of their own nature incomparably more powerful causes to carry the will than temporal ones. Since then, when two causes are counterpoised, the lesser when it comes to execution is no cause as to the substance of that effect, it follows that there is no cause to move the wills of a World of Believers to be willing to do that which they judge would lose themselves and their Posterity infinite goods, and bring them infinite harms*, &c. *in case a sufficient Proposal or Application be not wanting*, which he tells us * is not wanting, because *Christianity urged to execution, gives its followers a new life and a new nature, than which a nearer Application cannot be imagined.* Doth not this Argument extend to the lives of Christians, as well as their Belief; So that we may as well infer from these grounds, that it is impossible that those who profess Christianity should live contrary to it, as that they should fail to deliver down the Doctrine of Christ; because whatever can be an inducement and temptation to any man, to contradict this Doctrine by his practice, may equally prevail upon him to falsifie it. For why should men make any more scruple of damning themselves and their Posterity by teaching them false Doctrines, than by living wicked Lives? which are equally pernicious with Heretical Doctrines, not onely upon account of the bad influence which such examples of Fathers and Teachers are like to have upon their Scholars, but likewise they are one of the strongest arguments in the world to perswade them, that their Teachers do not themselves believe that Religion which they teach; for if they did, they would live according to it. Why should any man think, that those arguments of hope and fear which will not prevail upon the generality of Christians to make them live holy Lives, should be so necessarily efficacious to make them so much concerned for the preserving of a right Belief? Nay, we have great reason to believe that such persons will endeavour as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their Belief to their Lives. And this is the true source of those Innovations in Faith for which we challenge the Church of *Rome*; which any man may easily discern, who will but consider how all their new Doctrines are fitted to a secular Interest, and the gratifying of that inordinate appetite after riches and dominion which reigns in the Court of *Rome*, and in the upper part of the Clergy of that Church. * P. 6. * P. 65.

## SECT. IV.

§. 1. SEcondly, The main grounds of his Demonstration are apparently false: For, The 2d. Answer to his Demonstration.

*First*, This Demonstration supposeth that the generality of Christian

Parents in all Ages perfectly understood the Doctrine of Christ, and did not mistake any part of it; that they remembred it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to instruct their Children in it; which is as contrary to experience as that the generality of Christians are knowing and honest. It supposeth likewise, that this Doctrine, and every substantial part of it, was received and remembred by the generality of Children as it was taught, and was understood perfectly by them without the least material mistake: So he tells us*, *That the substance of Faith comes clad in such plain matters of Fact, that the most stupid man living cannot possibly be ignorant of it.* But whether this be reasonable to be supposed or no, may easily be determined not onely from every man's own experience of the World, but from a more advantageous instance of the experience of the first Age of Christianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent Teacher of this Doctrine than our Saviour? and yet his Disciples fell into many mistakes concerning it. So that in order to the certain propagating of it, the wisdom of God thought it requisite to endue even those who had learned this Doctrine from himself with an infallible spirit, by which they might be led into all Truth, and secured from errour and mistake; which had been unnecessary had it been impossible for them to mistake this Doctrine. The Apostles, who taught the World by an infallible Spirit, and with infinitely more advantage than ordinary Parents can teach their Children, yet in all the Churches which they planted they found Christians very apt to mistake and pervert their Doctrine, as appears by their frequent complaints in most of their Epistles. Nay the Apostle chargeth the Generality of the *Hebrews* * with such a degree of dulness and stupidity, that after fitting time and means of instruction they were still ignorant of the very Principles of Christianity: So he tells them, *That when for the time they ought to be Teachers of others, they had need that one should teach them again which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God.* And St. *Hierom* tells us*, *That the Primitive Churches were tainted with many gross Errors whilst the Apostles were alive, and the blood of Christ yet warm in* Judea. But it may be there have been better *Teachers* since, and *Children* are more apt to learn *now* than *Men* were *then*. Who knows how the World may be changed?

* P. 53.

* Heb. 5. 11, 12.

* Adv. Luciferian.

§. 2. *Secondly*, This Demonstration supposeth the hopes and fears which Christian Religion applies to Mens minds to be certain and necessary causes of actual will in Men to adhere to the Doctrine of Christ; and consequently that they must necessarily adhere to it. That he supposeth them to be *necessary*, I have his own word for it; for he tells* us, That *he hath endeavoured to demonstrate the indefectibleness of Tradition as the proper and necessary effect of those causes which preserve and continue Tradition on foot*, and what those *causes* are he told us before*, *That they are Hopes and Fears strongly applied.* But I hope that the indefectibleness of Tradition cannot be a *necessary effect* of the strong application of those Hopes and Fears, unless those Hopes and Fears be a *necessary cause* of that effect. And indeed this is sufficiently implied in his saying *that they are the causes of actual will* in Christians to adhere to Tradition. For if these *causes of actual will* be constant (as he must suppose) then they are certain and necessary and infallible causes of adhering to this Doctrine. For whatever is in act is necessary while it is so, and if it be constantly in act, the effect is always necessary. But what a wild supposition is this, That Moral Motives and Arguments working upon a free Principle, the Will of

* P. 7[illegible].

* P. 60.

Man, do necessarily produce their Effect? Is it necessary that the hopes of Heaven, and the fears of Hell should keep Christians constant to the Doctrine of Christ? and is it not as necessary that these arguments should prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonstrate that all men must be good who have sufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reason impossible that moral arguments should be of a necessary and infallible efficacy, because they are always propounded to a free Agent, who may chuse whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reasonable that men should yield to them, and if they be reasonable they will; but so long as they are free it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no vertue at all in them to be wrought upon by these arguments. For what vertue can it be in any man to entertain the Christian Doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this necessarily, *that is*, whether he will or no, and can no more chuse whether he will do so or not, than whether he will see the light when the Sun shines upon his eyes, or whether he will hear a sound when all the Bells in the Town are ringing in his ears, or (to use Mr. S's * own similitudes) whether he will *feel heat, cold, pain, pleasure, or any other material quality* that *affects* his *senses*. We see then how unreasonable his Suppositions are, and yet without these Grounds his Demonstration falls. For if it be possible that Christians may mistake or forget the Doctrine of Christ, or any part of it, or be defective in diligence to instruct others in it; or if it be possible that the Will of man which is free, may not be necessarily and infallibly swayed by the arguments of hope and fear, then it is possible that Tradition may fail. And is not this a good Demonstration which supports it self upon such Principles as do directly affront the constant experience, and the clearest reason of Mankind?

* P. 53.

§ 3. And here I cannot but take notice how inconsistent he is to himself in laying the Grounds of Tradition's certainty. In one part of his Book he tells us *, *That Tradition hath for its Basis the best Nature in the Universe, that is, Man's; Not according to his Moral part, defectible by reason of Original Corruption; nor yet his Intellectuals, darkly groping in the pursuit of Science, &c. But according to those Faculties in him perfectly and necessarily subject to the operations and strokes of Nature, that is, his Eyes, Ears, Handling, and the direct impressions of knowledge, as naturally and necessarily issuing from the affecting those senses, as it is to feel heat, cold, pain, pleasure, or any other material quality.* So that according to this Discourse, the *Basis of Tradition* is not *Man's Nature* considered as *Moral*, and capable of *Intellectual Reflexion*; for in this consideration it is *dark* and *defectible*: But *Man's Nature* considered onely as capable of *direct sensitive knowledge*, as acting *naturally and necessarily*. Which is to say, That Tradition is founded in the Nature of Man considered not as a Man but a Brute; under which consideration, I see no reason why he should call it *the best Nature in the Universe*. But now how will he reconcile this Discourse with the *Grounds* of his *Demonstration*? where he tells us, That the stability of Tradition is founded in the *Arguments of Hope and Fear*, the Objects of which being future and at a distance, cannot work upon a man immediately by *direct Impressions* upon his *senses*, but must work upon him by way of *Intellectual Reflexion* and *Consideration*. For I hope *he* will not deny but that the *Arguments of Hope and Fear*

* P. 5.

work

work upon man according to his Moral and Intellectual part, else how are they Arguments? And if man according to his *Moral part* be (as he says) *defectible*, how can the *indefectibility* of Tradition be founded in those arguments which work upon man onely according to his *Moral part*? I have purposely all along (both for the Readers ease and mine own) neglected to take notice of several of his inconsistencies, but these are such clear and transparent Contradictions, that I could do no less than make an example of them.

## SECT. V.

§. 1. Thirdly, This Demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable *Instances* to the contrary. I will mention but *two*.

*First*, The Tradition of the one true God, which was the easiest to be preserved of any Doctrine in the World, being short and plain, planted in every man's Nature, and perfectly suited to the reason of Mankind. And yet this Tradition, not having past through many hands (by reason of the long Age of man) was so defaced and corrupted, that the World did lapse into Polytheism and Idolatry. Now a man that were so hardy as to demonstrate against matter of Fact, might by a stronger Demonstration than Mr. *S*'s, prove that though it be certain this Tradition hath failed, yet it was impossible it should fail; as *Zeno* demonstrated the impossibility of motion against *Diogenes* walking before his eyes. For the Doctrine of the one true God *was setled in the heart of* Noah, *and firmly believed* by him *to be the way to happiness, and the contradicting or deserting of this, to be the way to misery.* And this Doctrine was by him so taught to his Children, who were *encouraged* by these Motives *to adhere to this Doctrine*, and to propagate it to their Children, and *were deterred by them from relinquishing it. And this was in all Ages the perswasion of the faithful.* Now the *Hopes* of Happiness, and the *Fears* of Misery *strongly applied, are the causes of actual will. Besides, the thing was feasible, or within their power*; that is, *what they are bred to was knowable by them*, and that much more easily than any other Doctrine whatsoever, being short, and plain, and natural. *This put, it follows as certainly that a great number in each Age would continue to hold themselves, and teach their Children as themselves had been taught*, that is, *would follow and stick to this Tradition of the one true God, as it doth that a cause put actually causing produceth its effect. Actually I say; for since the cause is put, and the Patient disposed, it follows inevitably that the cause is put still actually causing.* This demonstration which concludes an apparent falshood hath the whole strength of Mr. *S*'s, and several advantages beyond it. For the Doctrine conveyed by this Tradition is the most important, being the first Principle of all Religion; the danger of corrupting it as great, the facility of preserving it much greater, than of the Christian Doctrine, for the causes before-mentioned. And yet after all, it signifies nothing against certain experience, and unquestionable matter of Fact; onely it sufficiently shews the vanity of Mr. *S*'s pretended Demonstration built upon the same or weaker Grounds.

§. 2. *Secondly*, The other *Instance* shall be in the *Greek* Church, who received the Christian Doctrine as entire from the Apostles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truly to posterity, and the same *fears and hopes strongly applied to be the actual causes of will*; in a word, all the

ſame Arguments and Cauſes to preſerve and continue Tradition on foot, which the *Roman* Church had: And yet, to the utter confuſion of Mr. S's Demonſtration, Tradition hath failed among them. For as *Speculators*, they deny the *proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt from the Son*, and as *Teſtifiers*, they diſown any ſuch Doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent Age, or to any other Age of their Church by the Apoſtles as the Doctrine of Chriſt.

§. 3. To this *Inſtance* of the *Greek* Church, becauſe Mr. *White* hath offered ſomething by way of anſwer, I ſhall here conſider it. He tells us*, *That the plea of the Greek Church is Non-Tradition, alledging onely this, That their Fathers do not deliver the Doctrine of the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt; not that they ſay the contrary, which clearly demonſtrates there are no oppoſite Traditions between them and us.* But this was not the thing Mr. *White* was concerned to do, to demonſtrate there were no oppoſite Traditions between the *Greeks* and the *Latins*, but to ſecure his main Demonſtration of the impoſſibility of Traditions failing againſt this *Inſtance*. For that the *Greeks* have no ſuch Tradition as this, *That the Holy Ghoſt proceeds from the Son*, is as good evidence of the failure of Tradition as if they had a poſitive Tradition, *That he proceeds onely from the Father*; eſpecially if we conſider that *they* * charge the *Latin* Church with *Innovation* in this matter, and ſay that the addition of that Clauſe, *of the proceſſion from the Son alſo*, is a corruption of the ancient Faith, and a Deviliſh Invention. Why then does Mr. *White* go about to baffle ſo material an Objection (and, I fear his own Conſcience likewiſe) by a pitiful Evaſion inſtead of a ſolid Anſwer? What tho' there be no *oppoſite Traditions* between the *Greek* and *Latin* Church, yet if their Faith be oppoſite, will it not from hence follow that Tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. *White*, who hath ſo very well confuted the Infallibility of Popes and Councils, and thereby undermined the very Foundation of that Religion, ſhould not by the ſame light of Reaſon diſcover the fondneſs of his own Opinion concerning the Infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath more and greater abſurdities in it than that which he confutes. And to ſhew Mr. *White* the abſurdity of it, I will apply his Demonſtration of the Infallibility of *Chriſtian* Tradition in general, to the *Greek* Church in particular; by which every one will ſee that it does as ſtrongly prove the impoſſibility of Traditions failing in the *Greek* Church, as in the *Roman Catholick*, as they are pleaſed to call it. His Demonſtration is this*; *Chriſt commanded his Apoſtles to preach to all the World, and leſt any one ſhould doubt of the effect, he ſent his Spirit into them to bring to their remembrance what he had taught them; which Spirit did not onely give them a power to do what he enclined them to, but did cauſe them actually to do it.* I cannot but take notice by the way of the ill conſequence of this, which is, that men may doubt, whether thoſe who are to teach the Doctrine of Chriſt, will remember it, and teach it to others, unleſs they have that extraordinary and efficacious aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt which the Apoſtles had, if this be true, his Demonſtration is at an end, for he cannot plead that this aſſiſtance hath been continued ever ſince the Apoſtles. He proceeds, *The Apoſtles preached this Doctrine; the Nations underſtood it, lived according to it, and valued it as that which was neceſſary to them and their Poſterity, incomparably beyond any thing elſe.* All this I ſuppoſe done to, and by the *Greeks* as well as any other Nation. *Theſe things*

* Apology for Tradition, p. 51.

* Phoc. Ep. 7.

* De Fid. & Theol. Tract. 1. Sect. 4.

*things being put, it cannot enter into any man's understanding, but that the Christian* [Greeks] *of the first Age, being the Scholars of the Apostles, could and would earnestly commend the Christian Doctrine to their Posterity; if so, it is evident that they did. So that the continuance of purity of the Faith in the* [Greek] *Church is founded upon this, That Fathers always delivered the same Doctrine to their Children which they had received from their Fathers, and did believe it under this very Notion and Title as received; nor could any one* [of that Church] *deliver another Doctrine under this Title, but he would be convinced of a Lye by the rest; and if the whole* [Greek] *Church should endeavour to deliver a new Doctrine under that Title,* [and there's the same reason if they should leave out any Article of the old Doctrine] *that whole Age would be in their Consciences condemned of perfidiousness and paricide. Now this is as impossible, as it is that all mankind should conspire to kill them-*
* Ibid. Sect. 5. *selves.* And he afterwards * gives the reason why it is so impossible that Tradition should fail, and it is a very bold and saucy one, *That if the Tradition of the Christian Faith be more firm than the course of the Sun and Moon, and the propagation of mankind, then God hath shewn himself an unskilful Artificer.* What is there in all this Demonstration, which may not be accommodated to the *Greek* Church with as much force and advantage as to the *Catholick*? Unless he can shew that it is very possible that all the Men in *Greece* may conspire to kill themselves, but yet absolutely impossible that all the Men in the World should do so; which I am sure he cannot shew, unless he can demonstrate that though it be possible for a Million, of as wise men as any are to be found in the World together, to conspire to do a foolish action, yet it is impossible that an Hundred Millions not one jot wiser than the other, should agree together to the doing of it.

§. 4. From all this it appears, That Mr. *White*'s Answer to this Objection, doth not signifie any thing to his purpose. For if the *Procession of the Holy Ghost*, was part of Christ's Doctrine, then it was delivered by the Apostles to the *Greek* Church; if so, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next Age, and that to the next, and so on; but it seems they have failed. Where then *is the force of hopes and fears strongly applied? Where are the certain Causes of actual Will to adhere to this Doctrine?* Why is not the effect produced, *the Causes being put actually causing?* If the Apostles delivered this Doctrine, Oral Tradition is so clear and *unmistak-*
* P. 53. & 54. *able*, and * *brings down Faith clad in such plain matters of Fact, that the most stupid man living* (much less the *Greeks*, that were the flower of
* Ibid. Mankind) *could not possibly be ignorant of it; nay *, it exceeds all the power of Nature to blot Knowledge thus fixt out of the Soul of one single Believer,*
* P. 78. (much more out of so vast a Church) And * *since no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing he did so, 'tis a manifest impossibility, a whole Church should in any Age fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man.*
* P. 86. And * since *'tis natural for every man to speak Truth, and Grace is to perfect Nature in whatever is good in it, it follows that one truly Christian heart is far more fixt to Veracity, than others not imbu'd with these heavenly Tenets; and consequently that a multitude of such must incomparably exceed in point of testifying the same number of others, unfortified by Christ's Doctrine.*
* P. 89. And since * *such a thought cannot enter into the most depraved Nature, as to harm another without any good to himself, and yet this must be if we put Christian Fathers misteaching their Children unreceived Doctrines for received*

*ceived* (and I hope for the same reason received Doctrines for unreceived) *contrary to their knowledge. For supposing Sanctity in the* (Greek) *Church*, (and why may not we as well as in the *Latin*) *That is, that multitudes in it make Heaven their first love, and look on spiritual goods as their main concern*, &c. *it follows that had the Fathers* of that Church *in any Age consented to mislead their Posterity from what themselves* (not onely) *conceited* (but knew) *to be true, they should do the most extreme harm imaginable to others, without any the least good to themselves; which is perhaps impossible in one single man, more in few, but infinitely in a multitude, especially of good men.*

§. 5. Thus I might apply the rest of his Ranting Rhetorick (but that I am weary of Transcribing it) concerning * *the natural love of Parents to their Children* (unless we suppose the *Greek* Church destitute of it) which must needs engage them to use the means proper to bring them to Heaven, and save them from Hell: As also concerning *the natural care men have of not losing their Credit by telling pernicious Lyes*. And, not to omit the best part of his Demonstration * (which was therefore prudently reserved to the last place) I might likewise shew *how the Principles of each Science, Arithmetick, Geometry, Logick, Nature, Morality, Historical Prudence, Politicks, Metaphysicks, Divinity*, and last of all the new *Science* of *Controversie* (as he calls it) or the blessed Art of Eternal wrangling and disputing (*the first Principle* whereof (he tells us) is, *That Tradition is certain*) do all contribute to shew the certainty of Tradition, that is, the impossibility that any part of Christ's Doctrine should fail in the *Greek* Church any more than in the *Latin*. And surely *Arithmetick, Geometry, Logick, Natural Philosophy, Metaphysicks*, &c. will all stand up for the *Greek Church* in this quarrel; for considering that *Greece* was the place where the *Arts* and *Sciences* were born and bred, it is not to be imagined that they should be so disingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their best assistance to the service of their Country.

* P. 7.

* P.

§. 6. But it may be the *Greeks* cannot so justly pretend to Oral Tradition as the *Latins*. What if St. *Peter*, the Head of the Apostles, thought fit to share Scripture and Tradition between these two Churches, and laying his left hand on the *Greek* Church, and his right on the *Latin*, was pleased to confer *the great blessing of Oral Tradition* upon the *Latin* Church? which being to be the Seat of Infallibility, it was but fitting that she should be furnish'd with this infallible way of conveying the Christian Doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the *Scriptures* of the New Testament were left in *Greek*, so *Oral Tradition* was delivered down onely in *Latin*. This I confess is not altogether without some shew of reason: Mr. *S.* may do well to take the matter into his deeper consideration; he hath in his time improved as weak probabilities as these into lusty Demonstrations. And if he could but demonstrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this *Instance* of the *Greek* Church; otherwise (for ought I see) this Instance will hold good against *him*; and whatever he can say for the impossibility of Tradition's failing in the *Latin* Church, may all be said of the *Greek* Church, if he will but grant that the Apostles preached the same Doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear which this Doctrine contains in it, were applied as strongly to the *Greeks* as the *Latins*. And yet notwithstanding

all this, Tradition hath plainly failed in the *Greek* Church. Let him now aſſign the Age wherein ſo vaſt a number of men conſpired to leave out the *Article* of the *Proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt*; and ſhew how it was poſſible a whole Age could conſpire together to damn their Poſterity; or how the Faith of immediate Fore-fathers might be altered without any ſuch Conſpiracy; and we are ready to ſatisfie him how the Doctrine of the *Latin* Church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what Age it was done. And until he do this, I would entreat him to trouble us no more with thoſe canting queſtions (wherein yet the whole force of his Demonſtration lies) How is it poſſible a whole Age ſhould conſpire to change the Doctrine of their Forefathers? And in what Age was this done? For if it be reaſonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his Demonſtration, to aſſign the particular Age wherein the *Latin* Church conſpired to change the ancient Doctrine; with the ſame reaſon we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his Demonſtration, to name the particular Age wherein the *Greek* Church conſpired to alter the Doctrine of Chriſt, (which was undoubtedly in the firſt Age truly delivered to them by the Apoſtles) and alſo to ſhew from the rational force and ſtrength of Tradition, how it is more impoſſible for the *whole Church* to have failed in tranſmitting the Doctrine of Chriſt down to us, or to have conſpired to the altering of it, than for ſuch a multitude of Chriſtians as is the vaſt body of the *Greek Church*. If Mr. *S.* or Mr. *White* ſhew this, they do ſomething; otherwiſe, I muſt tell them, that unleſs they can manage theſe *pretty things* they call *Demonſtrations* better, they muſt ſhortly either quit their Reaſon, or their Religion; or elſe return to the honeſt old *Mumpſimus* of the Infallibility of the Church from an extraordinary and immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt; or (to make the buſineſs ſhort, and ſtop all gaps with one Buſh) come over to the *Jeſuits*, and acknowledge the *Popes Infallibility* both in matters of *Faith* and *Fact*; by which means they may reconcile themſelves to *him*, and prevent that direful ſtroke which threatens them from *Rome*, and is ready to cut them off from the Body of the *Traditionary Church*. And thus I have done with his *Firſt Demonſtration*; and I take it for a good ſign that the Popiſh Cauſe is at a very low Ebb, when ſuch *ſtuff* as this muſt be called *Demonſtration.*

## SECT. VI.

Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration *à Poſteriori.*

§. 1. I Come now to his *Demonſtration à Poſteriori*, which although it fall of it ſelf if the *Demonſtration à Priori* fail; yet becauſe it hath ſome peculiar abſurdities of its own, I ſhall conſider it by it ſelf as well as with relation to the other.

§. 2. Before he comes to lay it down with the *Grounds* of it, according to his uſual faſhion, he premiſeth ſomething as yielded by Proteſtants, which, in his ſenſe, no Proteſtant ever granted. Juſt ſo he dealt with us before concerning the Scriptures, ſaying, That by them the Proteſtants *muſt mean unſenſed Letters and Characters.* But let us ſee what it is. * *That this Demonſtration* à Poſteriori, *ſeems a needleſs endeavour againſt the Proteſtants, who yield that thoſe Points in which we agree, as the Trinity, Incarnation,* &c. *came down by this way of Tradition; And this* (he ſaith) *no Proteſtants ever denied.* And then he asks, *Whether the*

* P. 76.

*the same virtue of Tradition would not have been as powerful to bring down other Points in which we do not agree, had any such been?* Now if he speak any thing to his own purpose, he must suppose Protestants to yield, that all those Points wherein we are agreed, were conveyed down to us solely by Oral Tradition without Writing: But this all Protestants deny. So that, that onely which would avail his Cause against us, is to shew, that those Points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by Oral Teaching, but that they are likewise contained in Scripture, without which, we say, we can have no sufficient certainty and assurance at this distance, that they were the Doctrine of Christ, and that they were not either totally innovated, or else corrupted in the conveyance from what they were at first. And if he can shew this concerning any Point in difference, I promise to yield it to him.

§. 3. I come now to his *Demonstration*, which I shall set down in his own words, with the *Principles* upon which it relies. * *The effect then we will pitch upon, and avow to be the proper one of such a cause, is the present perswasion of Traditionary Christians (or Catholicks) that their Faith hath descended from Christ and his Apostles uninterruptedly, which we find most firmly rooted in their hearts; and the existence of this perswasion we affirm to be impossible without the existence of Traditions ever indeficiency to beget it. To prove this, I lay this first Principle; That Age, which holds her Faith thus delivered from the Apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any Age since the Apostles had changed or innovated therein. The second Principle shall be this: No Age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to Posterity as received from Christ by continual Succession.* The Sum of which is this, That because a present multitude of Christians (*viz.* the *Roman* Church) are perswaded, that Christ's Doctrine hath descended to them solely by an uninterrupted Oral Tradition, therefore, this perswasion is an effect which cannot be attributed to any other cause but the indeficiency of Oral Tradition. For if neither the present Age, nor any Age before, could make any change or innovation, then the perswasion of the present Age is a plain Demonstration that this Doctrine was always the same, and consequently that Tradition cannot fail.

§. 4. In answer to this, I shall endeavour to make good these *Four* things.

*First*, That these *Principles* wholly rely upon the Truth of the *Grounds* of his *Demonstration à Priori*.

*Secondly*, That these *Principles* are not sufficiently proved by him.

*Thirdly*, That Doctrines and Practices, which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same pretence to uninterrupted Tradition.

*Fourthly*, That it is not the present perswasion of the Church of *Rome* (whom he calls the Traditionary Christians) nor ever was, that their Faith hath descended to them solely by Oral Tradition. If I can now make good these *Four* things, I hope his Demonstration is at an end.

## SECT. VII.

§. 1. THat these *Principles* wholly rely upon the truth of the *Grounds* of his *Demonstration à Priori*. For if the Do- The First Answer to his second Demonstration.

 ctrine

ctrine of Christ was either imperfectly taught in any Age, or mistaken by the Learners, or any part of it forgotten (as it seems the whole *Greek* Church have forgot that fundamental Point of the *Procession of the Holy Ghost*, as the *Roman* Church accounts it) or if the Arguments of hope and fear be not necessary causes of actual will to adhere to Tradition, then there may have been changes and innovations in any Age, and yet men may pretend to have followed Tradition. But I have shewn, that Ignorance, and Negligence, and Mistake, and Pride, and Lust, and Ambition, and any other Vice or Interest, may hinder those causes from being effectual to preserve Tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do so, it is not to be expected that those Persons, who innovate and change the Doctrine, should acknowledge that their new Doctrines are contrary to the Doctrine of Christ; but that they should at first advance them as Pious, and after they have prevailed and gained general entertainment, then impudently affirm that they were the very Doctrines which Christ delivered; which they may very securely do, when they have it in their power to burn all that shall deny it.

§. 2. I will give a clear *Instance* of the possibility of this in the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, by shewing how this might easily come in, in the Ninth or Tenth Age after Christ. We will suppose then that about this time, when universal Ignorance, and the genuine Daughter of it (call her Devotion or Superstition) had over-spread the World, and the generality of People were strongly enclined to believe strange things; and even the greatest Contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of Mysteries, being told by their Priests and Guides, that the more contradictious any thing is to Reason, the greater merit there is in believing it: I say, let us suppose, that in this state of things, one or more of the most eminent then in the Church, either out of design, or out of superstitious ignorance and mistake of the sense of our Saviour's words used in the Consecration of the Sacrament, should advance this new Doctrine, That the words of Consecration, *This is my Body*, are not to be understood by any kind of *Trope* (as the like forms in Scripture are, as *I am the Vine*, *I am the Door*, which are plain *Tropes*) but being used about this great Mistery of the Sacrament ought in all reason to be supposed to contain in them some notable Mistery; which they will do, if they be understood of a real change of the substance of Bread and Wine, made by vertue of these words, in the real Body and Blood of our Saviour. And in all this, I suppose nothing but what is so far from being impossible, that it is too usual, for men either out of Ignorance or Interest, to advance new Opinions in Religion. And such a Doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious *Clergy* of that time, as a probable means to draw in the People to a greater veneration of them; which advantage Mr. *Rushworth* * seems to be very sensible of, when he tells us, That the power of the Priest in this particular, is *such a privilege, as if all the learned Clerks that ever lived since the beginning of the World, should have studied to raise, advance, and magnifie some one state of men to the highest pitch of Reverence and Eminency, they could never (without special light from Heaven) have thought of any thing comparable to this*. I am of his mind, that it was a very notable device, but (I am apt to think) invented *without any special light from Heaven*. Nor was such a Doctrine less likely to take and prevail among the *People* in an Age prodigiously ignorant, and strongly inclined to Superstition, and thereby

* Dial. 1. Sect. 4.

thereby well prepared to receive the grossest Absurdities under the notion of Mysteries; especially if they were such as might seem to conciliate a greater honour and reverence to the Sacrament. Now supposing such a Doctrine as this, so fitted to the humour and temper of the Age, to be once asserted, either by chance, or out of design, it would take like wild-fire: especially if by some one or more who bore sway in the Church, it were but recommended with convenient gravity and solemnity. And although Mr. *Rushworth* says *, It is *impossible that the Authority of one man* should sway so much in the World, because (says he) *surely the Devil himself would rather help the Church, than permit so little pride among men*: yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cunning reason: For though he delivers it confidently, and with a *surely*, yet I make some doubt whether the Devil would be so forward to help the Church; nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think that he would rather chuse to connive at this humble and obsequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of Religion, than cross a design so dear to him by unseasonable temptations to pride: So that notwithstanding Mr. *Rushworth*'s reason, it seems very likely that such a Doctrine, in such an Age, might easily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great Persons in the Church. For nothing can be more suitable to the easie and passive temper of superstitious Ignorance, than to entertain such a Doctrine with all imaginable greediness, and to maintain it with a proportionable Zeal. And if there be any wiser than the rest, who make Objections against it as if this Doctrine were new and full of contradictions, they may easily be born down by the stream, and by the eminency and authority and pretended sanctity of those who are the heads of this Innovation. And when this Doctrine is generally swallowed, and all that oppose it are looked upon and punished as Hereticks, then it is seasonable to maintain that this Doctrine was the doctrine of Fore-fathers, to which end it will be sufficient to those who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three sayings of the Ancients to that purpose. And as for the contradictions contained in this Doctrine, it was but telling the People then (as they do in effect now) that contradictions ought to be no scruple in the way of Faith: that the more impossible any thing is, 'tis the fitter to be believed: that it is not praise-worthy to believe plain possibilities, but this is the gallantry and heroical power of Faith, this is the way to oblige God Almighty for ever to us, to believe flat and down-right contradictions: For *God requires at the Peoples hands* (as Mr. *Rushworth* * tells us) *a Credulity of things above and beyond Nature; nay, beyond all the Fables, be it spoken with respect, that ever man invented.* After this Doctrine hath proceeded thus far, and by the most inhumane severities and cruelties supprest Dissenters, or in a good measure rooted them out; then if they please even this new word *Transubstantiation* may pretend also to Antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a word used by Christians in all Ages, and transmitted down to them by those from whom they received the Doctrine of the Sacrament as *a term of Art* appendant to it. And when a superstitious Church and designing Governours have once gained this Post, and by means of this enormous Article of *Transubstantiation* have sufficiently debauched the minds of men, and made a breach in their understandings wide enough for the entertaining of any Error, though never so gross and senseless; then Innovations come in a-main, and by sholes; and the more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is

* Dial. 3. Sect. 7.

* Dial. 1. Sect. 4.

for that very reason the more proper matter for an Article of Faith. And if any of these Innovations be objected against, as contrary to former belief and practice, it is but putting forth a lusty act of Faith, and believing another contradiction, that though they be contrary yet they are the same.

§. 3. And there is nothing in all this, but what is agreeable both to History and Experience. For that the Ninth and Tenth Ages, and those which followed them till the Reformation, were thus prodigiously ignorant and superstitious, is confirmed by the unanimous consent of all Histories; and even by those Writers, that have been the greatest Pillars of their own Religion. And Experience tells us, that in what Age soever there are a great company of superstitious People, there will never be wanting a few crafty Fellows to make use of this easie and pliable humour to their own ends. Now that this was the state of those Ages of the Church, will be evident to any from these Testimonies. *Platina* * writes of Pope *Romanus*, that he null'd the acts of his Predecessor *Stephanus*; *For* (says he) *these Popes minded nothing else but how they might extinguish both the Name and Dignity of their Predecessors.* And if so, who can doubt, but that these Popes who made it their business to destroy the very memory of their Ancestors, would be very little careful to preserve the Doctrine of Fore-fathers. But what the care of those Times was in this particular, may be conjectured from what *Onuphrius* * says by way of confutation of that *passage* in *Platina*, concerning Pope *Joan's* reading publickly at *Rome* at her first coming thither. *This* (says he) *is utterly false, for there was nothing that they were less solicitous about in those Times, than to furnish the City with any publick Teachers.* And the Time which *Onuphrius* speaks of, was much about the beginning of the Tenth Century. *Phil. Bergomensis* * says, *It happened in that Age through the slothfulness of men, that there was a general decay of Vertue both in the Head and Members.* Again *, *These Times through the Ambition and cruel Tyranny of the Popes were extremely unhappy, — For the Popes setting aside the fear of God and his worship, fell into such enmities among themselves, as cruel Tyrants exercise towards one another.* Sabellicus * says, *It is wonderful to observe what a strange forgetfulness of all Arts did about this time seize upon men; insomuch that neither the Popes, nor other Princes, seem'd to have any sense or apprehension of any thing that might be useful to humane life. There were no wholesome Laws, no Reparations of Churches, no pursuit of liberal Arts; but a kind of stupidity and madness and forgetfulness of manners had possessed the minds of men.* And a little after, *I cannot* (says he) *but much wonder, from whence these Tragical Examples of Popes should spring; and how their minds should come to be so devoid of all Piety, as neither to regard the Person which they sustained, nor the place they were in.* *Sigonius* * speaking of these Times, about the beginning of the Tenth Century, calls them *the foulest and blackest, both in respect of the wickedness of Princes, and the madness of the People, that are to be found in all Antiquity.* *Genebrard* * speaking of the same Time, *This* (says he) *is called the unhappy Age; being destitute of men eminent for Wit and Learning, as also of famous Princes and Popes. In this Time there was scarce any thing done worthy to be remembred by Posterity.* And he adds afterwards, *But chiefly unhappy in this one thing, that for almost* 150 *years together, about* 50 *Popes did utterly degenerate from the vertue of their Ancestors.* He should have added farther, but even to a miracle *happy* in another respect, that during this long and total degeneracy from the Piety and Vertue of their Ancestors,

* In Vit. Romani, Papæ 117. A. C. 900.

* In Platin.

* Anno 506.

* Anno 908.

* Ennead. 9. L. 1. Anno 900.

* De Regn. Ital. L. 6.

* Chron. L. 4.

they did not in the least swerve from them in matter of Faith and Doctrine: A thing incredible, were there not *Demonstration* for it. *Werner* * gives this Character of that Time; *About the year of our Lord One Thousand, there began an effeminate Time, in which the Christian Faith began to degenerate exceedingly, and to decline from its ancient vigour*; insomuch *that in many Countries of Christendom, neither Sacraments nor Ecclesiastical Rites were observed—And people were given to Soothsaying and Witchcrafts, and the Priest was like the People.* It seems by this Testimony, that Tradition did faulter a little in that Age, else the *Christian Faith* could not possibly have degenerated and declined so very much: And (which threatens Mr. *S*'s Demonstration most of all) that the *Practical* Tradition of *Sacraments*, and other *Ecclesiastical Observances* did fail in *many Christian Countries. Gerbert* *, who lived in that Time, gives this short Character of the *Roman* Church, in an Epistle of his to *Stephen* Deacon of that Church, *The World stands amazed at the Manners of* Rome. But most full is the complaint of a great *Prelate* of the Church * concerning those Times; *In the West* (says he) *and almost all the World over (especially among those who were called the Faithful) Faith failed, and there was no fear of God among them:* (it seems the Argument of Fear had lost its force) *Justice was perished from among men, and violence prevailing against equity governed the Nations. Fraud, Deceit, and the Arts of Couzenage were grown universal. All kind of Vertue gave way as an useless thing, and wickedness supply'd its place. The World seemed to be declining apace towards its Evening, and the second coming of the Son of man to draw near: For love was grown cold, and Faith was not found upon Earth. All things were in confusion, and the World looked as if it would return to its old Chaos.—All sorts of Fornication were committed with the same freedom as if they had been lawful Actions; for men neither blush'd at them, nor were punish'd for them —Nor did the Clergy live better than the People.—For the Bishops were grown negligent of the Duty of their place,* &c. *In a word, men ran themselves headlong into all Vice, and all Flesh had corrupted its way.* And farther to shew the great neglect of Priests and Bishops in the work of Teaching and Instructing (which is so necessary to the preserving of Tradition inviolable) I will add the Testimony of one * who lived in those Times; who tells us, *That in those days, the Priests and Bishops, who ought to have been the Pillars of the Church, were so negligent that they did not mind the Divine Scripture; nor take any care to teach and instruct Scholars that might succeed them, as we read holy Men had used to do, who left many Scholars perfectly instructed to be their Successors.* If they had onely neglected the Scriptures, all might have been well enough; but it seems they took no care to instruct people in the way of *Oral Tradition*, nor to furnish the Church with a new Generation of able Teachers who might *deliver down from hand to hand the sense and faith of Fore-fathers.* This last Testimony, the late Learned Lord Primate of *Ireland*, Bishop *Usher* (in his Book *de Christian. Eccles. Success.* &c. * where several of the Testimonies I have produced, with many more to the same purpose, may be seen) cites out of a *M.S.* in *Bennet* College Library in *Cambridge*; concerning the Authority of which *M.S.* there need be no dispute between Mr. *S.* and me; because the whole force and effect of this Testimony is sufficiently contained in those Citations which I have brought out of publick and unquestionable Books.

* Fascic. Tempor.

* Epist. 40.

* Belli. Sacr. L. 1. c. 8.

* Elfric. Ser. ad Sacerdot.

* C. 2. & 3.

§. 4. All these Testimonies which I have produced are, in general and for the substance of them, confirmed by *Two* of the greatest Props of the *Romish* Church; *Bellarmine* and *Baronius*. *Bellarmine* * says of this Tenth Age, *That there was never any either more unlearned or more unhappy*. *Baronius* * speaks more particularly, *What was then the face of the Roman Church? How deformed? When Whores, no less powerful than vile, bore the chief sway at* Rome; *and at their pleasure changed Sees, appointed Bishops; and (which it is horrible to mention) did thrust into St.* Peter's *See their own Gallants, false Popes, who would not have been mentioned in the Catalogue of the Roman Popes, but onely for the more distinct Recording of so long a Succession of Times*. And a little after, *Christ was then (it seems) in a very deep sleep— And which was worse; when the Lord was thus asleep there were no Disciples to awaken him, being themselves all fast asleep. What kind of Cardinal Presbyters and Deacons can we think were chosen by these Monsters, when nothing is so natural as for every one to propagate his own likeness?* It is very much that these lewd Women, and their Favourite-Popes, Cardinals, and Bishops who then swayed the Church, should, when they were so careless of their own Souls, be so tender of the salvation of Posterity; and when they administred all other affairs of the Church so extravagantly, should be so careful of the *main chance*, as to transmit the Christian Doctrine entire and uncorrupted to succeeding Ages. Yet Mr. *S.* hath demonstrated this *à Posteriori*, which seems so very strange to a man that considers things *à Priori*.

* De Rom. Pontif. L. 4. c. 12.

* Ann. Tom. 10. An. 900.

§. 5. But it may be, this dismal state of the *Roman* Church lasted but a little while; and she did in the same Age, before Tradition could be interrupted, recover her self out of this degenerate condition. I will therefore enquire a little into the state of succeeding Times. And I find in the Thirteenth *Century*, St. *Bernard* * complaining, That the degeneracy of the Priests was in his days greater than ever; *We cannot* (says he) *now say, as is the People so is the Priest; for the People are not so bad as their Priests*. In the Fifteenth *Century*, *Nic. de Clemangiis*, who lived in that Time, wrote a Book upon this argument, *Of the corrupt state of the Church*; by which we may make some judgment whether in that Age it was (as Mr. *S.* says) impossible but that the Christian Doctrine should be entirely preserved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He says * there was an universal degeneracy in the Church, *from the very Head of it to its lowest Members*. In the same *Chapter* he complains, *Who is there that preaches the Gospel to the People? Who shews them the way to Salvation either by word or action?* It seems there was a great failure both of *Ora[l and]* *Practical* Tradition. Again *, speaking of the Pope's taking to him[self th]e Collation of all vacant Bishopricks and Dignities; he says, one might think the Pope did this, *that the Church might be provided of worthier Governors, both in respect of their Learning, and their lives, did not the thing it self declare the contrary, and that ignorant and useless Persons (provided they had money) were by Simony advanced to the highest degrees in the Church*. And *, speaking what a vast number of Candidates there was usually at *Rome* from all Parts waiting for Benefices and Dignities, he tells us, That many of these *did not come from their Studies, or from Schools of Learning, to govern Parishes; but from the Plow, and from the meanest Professions: and that they understand Latin and Arabick much at the same rate; and many of them could not read at all. But it may be* (says he) *their manners were such as might be some excuse*

* In Convers. Sancti Pauli Serm. 1.

* C. 3.

* C. 5.

* C. 6.

*excuse for their Ignorance. No; though their Learning was but little, their Vertue was less; for being brought up in Idleness, they followed nothing but Debauchery and Sports*, &c. *Hence it comes to pass, that in all places there are so many wicked, and wretched, and ignorant Priests. —Hence it is that Priests are so contemned by the common People. —Formerly the Priesthood was highly honoured by the People, and nothing was more venerable than that Order of men; but now nothing is more vile and despicable. —* I make no doubt, but there are now more Thieves and Robbers, than true Pastors in the Church.—* Why should any man now flatter himself with hopes of Preferment, because of his Vertue or Learning? Men do not now (as formerly) rise in the Church by such Arts— * Which of those that are now adays advanced to the Pontifical Dignity, hath so much as perfunctorily read, or heard, or learnt the Scriptures; yea, or ever touched any more than the cover of the Bible?* Again *, speaking of the prodigious Covetousness of the Governors of the Church, and the gross neglect of their Flocks, *They would* (says he) *much more contentedly bear the loss of ten thousand Souls, than of ten or twelve Shillings. But why do I say more contentedly? When without the least trouble or disturbance to themselves, they can bear the loss of Souls; a thing so far from their care, that it never entered into their thoughts.* Had the *Hereticks* of those days but had Wit enough, and a little Money, they might (it seems) for a small Sum have hired the Governors of the Church to have renounced Tradition, or to have ceased to propagate it; though they had known that in so doing they should have damned all their Posterity. He goes on, and tells us, *That if there were perhaps any one who did not take these courses, the rest would all snarl at him, call him Fool, and say he was unfit to be a Priest. —So that the study of the Scriptures (together with the Professors of it) was turned into laughter and scorn by all; but (which is prodigious) especially by the Popes, who prefer their own Traditions many degrees before the Commands of God.* I desire Mr. *S.* to take notice in what kind of times *Tradition* was set up against Scripture. Again *, speaking of the choice of persons to be Priests, he tells us, *That there was no enquiry made into their Lives, no question about their Manners: As for their Learning* (says he) *what need I speak of that? When we see the Priests, almost universally, have much ado to read, though but in an hesitating and spelling fashion, drawing out one syllable after another, without understanding either the sense of what they read, or the words.* I am now reconciled to *oral Tradition*, and convinced that there was great need of it in those Ages in which scarce any of the Priests could either write or read. I omit the particulars of what he says * concerning the *common Drunkenness and incontinency of Priests, who* (because they made Conscience of Marriage) *kept Whores in their Houses*; concerning the dissolute Lives of *Monks*; and concerning *Nunneries*, which instead of being *the Sanctuaries of God, were the abominable Stews of* Venus, *and the Receptacles of lascivious young men*; insomuch (says he) *that at this day it is the same thing to put a Virgin into a Nunnery, and to make her a common Strumpet.* And to shew that he does not speak these things of a few, but with relation to the general corruption of that Age, he adds *, *That wickedness did so abound in all Orders of men, that scarce one among a thousand was to be found who did truly live up to his Profession: And if there was any one that did not follow these lewd courses, he became ridiculous to others, and was branded either as an insolent singular Mad-man or an Hypocrite.* I will conclude this long Testimony with the character which he gives * of one of the Popes of his time, *Clement* by name, *viz. That he did chiefly apply himself to*

* C. 9
* C. 11.
* C. 13.
* C. 14.
* C. 16.
* C. 20, 21, 22.
* C. 2[illegible]
* C. 27

*gratifie and oblige all the Parasites and Buffoons that had any interest in the several Courts of Princes : And to this end, did confer upon these, and upon handsome young Boys (which he much delighted in) almost all the vacant Bishopricks, and most of the other Church Dignities.* It is well that *oral Tradition* hath the security of *Infallibility*, otherwise it had in all *probability* been lost among this lewd sort of People, which yet they gravely call the *Holy Roman-Catholick Church.*

§. 6. To this effect I might have produced Testimonies concerning every Age from the *Ninth* to the *Sixteenth* ; but Mr. *Cressy* hath saved me that labour, who acknowledges *, that *these worst times of the Church, when Ignorance, Worldliness, Pride, Tyranny,* &c. *reigned with so much scope ; When the Popes (so wicked, so abominable in their Lives) enjoyed so unlimited a power even over secular Princes themselves, and much more over the Clergy :* I say, he acknowledges that these *worst times* continued during the space *of about six Ages before* Luther : A competent time (one would think) for Tradition to have miscarried in, were it not (as Mr. *S.* says) *indefectible.* Mr. *Cressy* indeed tells us *, That this *was to him an irrefragable Testimony of a strange watchfulness of Divine Providence over the Church, to preserve it from the Gates of Hell (that is, established and dangerous Errors) during these worst times.* And very likely it is that this might appear so to such a *Catholick whose judgment,* he tells us, *it is to renounce his own judgment :* but it will never appear *irrefragable,* to any man that hath his judgment about him, unless Mr. *Cressy* can prove, that by that phrase, *viz. the Gates of Hell,* the Scripture does not mean gross wickedness of Life, as well as *dangerous errors* in Opinion ; and likewise, that a general vitiousness and debauchery of Manners is not as pernicious to Christianity, and as destructive to the end of it, as *establish'd Errors* in Doctrine. And if so, that the Providence of God is not equally concerned to preserve the Church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved these three things, then this Declamatory discourse of his may signifie something, but not before.

* Exomolog. c. 68.

* Ibid.

§. 7. Now if this be a true representation of the state of the *Roman* Church in those Ages, was not this a very fit time for the Devil to play his Pranks in? Will any man that reads these Testimonies, think it impossible that the Doctrine of Christ should have been depraved in this Age; or that the most senseless and absurd Tenets might then be brought in under the notion of Christian Doctrines? When scarce any one knew what the Doctrine of Christ was : When a general ignorance of Letters, and almost an universal stupidity and madness had seized upon the minds of men : When there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of Vertue and Piety both in the Head and Members of the Church : When the lives of the Popes were Tragically wicked, and no footsteps of Piety appeared in them : When for about 150 years together, in a continued succession of 50 Popes, there was scarce one pious and vertuous Man (or Woman) sate in that Chair : When the *Whores* governed *Rome*, and put out and put in Bishops at their pleasure ; and made their own *Gallants* Popes, who would be sure to make a College of Cardinals of such Monsters as themselves : When *pretty Boys*, and *Parasites*, and *Buffoons*, led the Head of the Church by the Nose, and were gratified with the Best Bishopricks and Dignities in the Church : When there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the Christian Faith:

When

When in many Countreys neither Sacraments, nor other Ecclesiastical Rites were observed: When Violence and Fraud, and all the Arts of Deceit and Couzenage, and blacker Arts than these, were the common study and practice: When Intemperance, and all kind of Lewdness and Debauchery, reigned in all sorts and orders of Men: When the generality of Bishops and Priests (who, according to Mr. *Rushworth* *, can only teach the Traditionary Doctrine) were ignorant in the Scriptures and in every thing else (very few of them being able so much as to read tolerably) and did neglect to teach the People, and to breed up any in knowledge to succeed them in their Office; and in the lewdness of their Lives did surpass the Vilest of the People. Was not such an Age a fit season to plant the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* in? Or if any thing more monstrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what Weeds would not have grown in so rank a Soil? Doth Mr *S.* think it impossible, that those that were born in the Church then, should be ignorant of the Doctrine of Christ, when scarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when so few understood, and fewer practised it: When prodigious Impiety and Wickedness did overspread the Church, from the Pope down to the meanest of the Laity; can any one believe that Men generally made Conscience to instruct their Children in the true Faith of Christ? Was it impossible there should be any neglect of this Duty, when all others failed? That there should be any mistake about the Doctrine of Christ, when there was so much Ignorance? unless he be of Mr. *Rushworth*'s * mind, who reckons *Ignorance* among *the Parents of Religion.* Where were then the *Arguments of Hope and Fear*? Were they *strongly applied*, or were they not? Were they *causes of actual will* in Christians to believe well, when they lived so ill? Or is Christianity only fitted to form Mens minds to a right belief, but of no efficacy to govern their Lives? Hath Christ taken care to keep his Church from Error, but not from Vice? As the great Cardinal *Perron* * (stooping below his own Wit and Reason to serve a bad Cause) tells us, *That the Church sings, and will sing to the end of the World, I am black, but I am fair; that is to say, I am black in Manners, but fair in Doctrine*: As if the meaning of the Prophecies and Promises of Scripture made to the Church were this, that by the extraordinary care of God's Providence, and peculiar assistance of his Holy Spirit, she should be Wicked, but Orthodox to the end of the World. Where were then the *vigorous causes imprinting* Christ's Doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at *Rome* than any where else; and of securing that *See* and its *supreme Pastor* in the faith and practice of the Christian Doctrine, above any other See or Pastor whatsoever? Who is so little versed in History, as not to understand the dismal state of Religion in the *Romish* Church, in those times? Who does not know what advantages the Bishops of *Rome*, and their servile Clergy made of the Ignorance and Superstition of those and the succeeding Ages; and by what Arts and Steps they raised themselves to that power which they held in the Church for a long while after? When they could tread upon the Necks of Princes; and make a great King walk bare-foot, and yield himself to be scourged by a company of petulant Monks: When they could send any Man upon an Errand to visit the Holy Sepulchre, or the Shrine of such a Saint; and command Five or Six Kings with great Armies upon a needless Expedition into the Holy Land, that so during

* Dial. 3. Sect. 5.

* Dial. 3. Sect. 7.

* Reply to K. *James.* L. 4. C. 6.

their absence they might play their own Game the better: When they could mint Miracles, and impose upon the belief of the People (without the Authority of any ancient Books) absurd and counterfeit Tales of ancient Saints and Martyrs, as delivered down to them by *Tradition*; and could bring that foppish Book the *Legend*, almost into equal Authority and Veneration with the *Bible*; and perswade the easie People that St. *Denys* carried his own Head in his Hand, after it was cut off, Two Miles, and kiss'd it when he laid it down. Any one that shall but reflect upon the monstrous practices of the *Roman* Bishops and Clergy in these Ages, the strange Feats they played, and what absurdities they imposed upon the superstitious credulity of Princes and People, may readily imagine not only the possibility, but the easiness of innovating new Doctrines as they pleased, under the specious pretences of Antiquity, and constant and uninterrupted Tradition.

§. 8. And this kind of Discourse concerning the possibility of Errors coming into the Church, is not, as Mr. *White* ridiculously compares it *, as if an *Orator* should go about to perswade people, that *George, by the help of a long staff and a* nimble *cast of his body*, and such like advantages, *might leap over* Paul's *Steeple*; *never considering all the while the disproportion of all these advantages to the height of the Steeple: so* (saith he) *he that discourseth at large how Errors use to slide into Man's Life, without comparing the power of the causes of Error to the strength of resisting, which consists in this Principle, Nothing is to be admitted but what descends by Tradition*, &c. *says no more towards proving an Error's over-running the Church, than the Orator for* George'*s leaping over the Steeple.* How vain is this? When it appears from this Instance that I have given of the state of the *Roman* Church, in the *Ninth* and *Tenth* Centuries, and afterwards; that the causes of Error were infinitely stronger than the power of resistance. The great causes of Error are *Ignorance* and *Vice*; where *Ignorance* reigns, there's no *Power*; where *Vice*, no *Will* to resist it. And how great the Ignorance and Vitiousness of all Orders of Men in the *Roman* Church was, is too too apparent from the Testimonies I have brought. Where was the strength of resisting Error, when for 150 Years together the Popes were the vilest of Men, Bishops and Priests overwhelmed with Ignorance, abandoned to all manner of Vice, and most supinely negligent in instructing the People? In such a degenerate state of a Church, what strength is there in this Principle, *Nothing is to be admitted but what descends by Tradition*? When those,who ought to teach Men what that Doctrine is which was derived to them by Tradition, are generally careless of their Duty, and ignorant themselves what that Doctrine is; When they addict themselves wholly to the satisfying of their Ambition, and other Lusts, and carry on designs of Gain, and getting Dominion over the People. What can hinder Men so disposed from corrupting the Doctrine of Christ, and suiting it to their own Lusts and Interests? And what shall hinder the People from embracing those Corruptions? when by the negligence of their Pastors to instruct them,and not only so,but also by their being deprived of the Scriptures in a known Tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true Doctrine of Christ is. So that in an Age of such profound Ignorance and Vice, and general neglect of Instruction 'tis so far from being impossible for Errors to over-run a Church, that the contrary is morally impossible; and *George's long staff* and advantageous *cast of*

* Apology for Tradition, p. 49.

*of his Body* are more powerful causes to enable him to leap over *Paul's* Steeple, than this Principle, *That nothing is to be admitted, but what descends by Tradition*, is to keep Errors out of a Church in an Ignorant and Vitious Age; when few or none are either able or willing to instruct Men in the Truth. For suppose this always to have been the Principle of Christians, *viz. That nothing is to be admitted as the Doctrine of Christ, but what is descended to them by Tradition*: How shall this Principle secure the Church from Heresie, any more than this, *viz. That nothing but Truth is to be assented to*, doth secure Men from Error? Or more than this, *viz. That no Man is to do any thing but what is wise and vertuous*, does secure the generality of Mankind from Folly and Vice?

## SECT. VIII.

§. 1. SEcondly, The *Principles* upon which this Demonstration relies are not sufficiently proved by him. The second Answer to his second Demonstration.

His *first* Principle is this, *That Age, which holds her Faith delivered thus from the Apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any Age since the Apostles had changed or innovated any thing therein. This Proposition* (he tells us) *needs no proof to evidence it, but only an Explication. For since no Man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change or innovate in the case proposed without knowing he did so; 'tis a manifest impossibility a whole Age should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one single man.* But (by his favour) that which he says is no *Proof*, but only an *Explication*, is a *Proof* if it be any thing; and the force of it this; That which is *inconsistent with the nature of one single man, is manifestly impossible to a whole Age*; but it is inconsistent with the nature of any single Man *to hold contrary to his knowledge, &c.* therefore impossible to a whole Age; and consequently, *that Age which holds her Faith delivered thus from the Apostles, neither can it self have changed any thing, nor, &c.* So that in order to the making good of this *first Principle*, Mr. *S.* hath left nothing unproved but onely this Proposition, *namely*, That it is impossible that any one single Man that holds his Faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly from the Apostles, should ever himself have changed any thing in it, or know or doubt that any Age since the Apostles hath changed or innovated any thing therein: And to make out the truth of this Proposition, there only remains this to be proved, *viz.* That it is impossible for any single Man to be mistaken. For if that be possible, then contrary to Mr. *S.* a man may hold that to have been delivered as a Doctrine of Faith from the Apostles which was not so delivered.

§. 2. His *second Principle* is this, *That no Age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to posterity as received from Christ by continual Succession.* He proves it thus; *Since Man is a rational Creature, he must have some Reason or Motive, good or bad, which he proposeth to himself as an end to be atchieved by his action: And whatever his remote end is, his immediate end, in telling posterity a late invented thing was held immediately before, is to make them believe it. Wherefore since a seen impossibility cannot be a Motive to one not frantick; and since 'tis evidently impossible they should make posterity believe a thing so universally known to be false, as this must needs be,* &c. *it is as impossible this Principle should faulter, as that the foregoing Age should conspire to act without a motive, or that the succeeding*

*Age*

*Age should believe what they know to be otherwise, that is, should hold both sides of a Contradiction in a clear matter of Fact.* The force of which is this, That it is impossible that any man not frantick should attempt to innovate in matter of Christian Doctrine, because the immediate end of such an attempt must be to have his new Doctrine believed; but it is impossible he should attain this end, and impossible he should not see that it is impossible to attain it: Now a seen impossibility is an end that cannot move any one that is not frantick; therefore no man that is not frantick, can attempt to innovate in matter of Christian Doctrine. Thus he hath demonstrated it impossible that there should be any Hereticks, if a Heretick be one that attempts to innovate in matter of Christian Doctrine. For if there be any such attempters they must be frantick, and if they be frantick they can be no Hereticks; for Heresie implies a Crime, but God will not impute the actions of mad men to them as faults. Again, suppose he that attempts to innovate be mistaken (and I hope Mr. *S.* will grant that a Heretick is fallible) and think that which he delivers as Christ's Doctrine to be really so, though indeed it be not; why should such a Person think it impossible to make men believe that to be received from Christ which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was so? And if this be granted, then it is not impossible that *Man, though he be a rational Creature,* may attempt to innovate. And if so, then his *second Principle* is not proved. If Mr. *S.* had any regard to *the noble Science of Controversie* (whereof he pretends to be so great a Master) he would not bring such trifling Sophisms instead of demonstrative Proofs: And nothing less than a demonstrative Proof will serve to establish any Principle upon which a Demonstration is to be built.

## SECT. IX.

The *Third* Answer to Mr. *S*'s second Demonstration.

§. 1. Doctrines and Practices which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the same pretence to uninterrupted Tradition. And of this I shall give several Instances; one among the *Jews*, the rest among *Christians*.

1. I shall instance among the *Traditionary Jews*, whose perswasion in our Saviour's time was, and still is, that their Oral Doctrine, which they call their *Cabala*, hath descended to them from *Moses* uninterruptedly. Now here is the *existence of such a perswasion*, as Mr. *S.* affirms to be *impossible without Traditions ever-indeficiency to beget it.* And this perswasion of theirs is most exactly parallel with the pretensions of the *Romish* Church according to Mr. *S.* For here's a multitude of Traditionary *Jews*, manifoldly greater in proportion to the Dissenters in that Church, than the *Romish* Church is in comparison to those Christians that dissent from Her. *Josephus* tells us *, That *the richer sort were of the perswasion of the Sadduces, but the multitude were on the Pharisees side.* So that the *Pharisees* had this mark of the true Church (as *Bellarmine* calls it) common to them with the Church of *Rome*, that they were the greatest number, and so they continue to this very day; insomuch that although they do not call themselves the *Catholicks*, yet I am sure they call all *Jews* that do dissent from them *Schismaticks.* Now that the *Sadduces* were for the written Law against Oral Tradition, is I confess no credit to us; but that our *Saviour* reproved the Traditionary Doctrines and Practices of the *Pharisees*, because by them they made void the

* Antiq. Jud. l. 13. c. 18.

the written Law, is much more to the diſcredit of the Aſſerters of Oral Tradition. Both *Romaniſts* and *Phariſees* they own alike a *written Doctrine*, but then they both pretend the true ſenſe and explication thereof to have deſcended to them by *Oral Tradition*. For juſt as the Traditionary *Chriſtians* do now, ſo *Joſephus* tells * us the Traditionary *Jews* of old, the *Phariſees*, did pretend by their Oral Tradition *to interpret the Law more accurately and exactly* than any other Sect. In like manner *he* * tells us, That *all things, that belonged to Prayer and Divine Worſhip, were regulated and adminiſtred according to their interpretations* of the Law. And they both agree in this, to make void the *Word of God by their Tradition*; which the *Phariſees* did no otherwiſe than Mr. *S.* does, by equalling *Oral Tradition* to *Scripture*; nay preferring it above *Scripture*, in making it the ſole Rule of Faith, and interpreting the Scripture according to it. Hence are thoſe common ſayings in the *Talmud*, and other Jewiſh Books; *Do not think that the written Law is the foundation, but that the Law Orally delivered is the right foundation*; which is to ſay with Mr. *S.* that not the Scripture, but *Oral Tradition* is the true *Rule of Faith*. Again, *There is more in the words of the Scribes* (*viz.* the Teſtifiers of Tradition) *than in the words of the written Law.* Again, *The Oral Law excells the Written, as much as the Soul doth the Body*; which accords very well with what Mr. *S.* frequently tells us, That the Scripture without Tradition is but a dead Letter, deſtitute of Life and ſenſe. Hence alſo it is that they required the People (as the Traditionary Church does now) to yield up themſelves to the dictates of Tradition even in the moſt abſurd things, as appears by that common ſaying among them, *If the Scribes ſay that the right hand is the left, and the left the right* (that Bread is Fleſh, and Wine is Bloud) *hearken to them*, that is, make no ſcruple of whatſoever they deliver as Tradition, though never ſo contrary to Reaſon or Senſe. And laſtly, The Doctrines of the *Phariſees* were many of them *Practical*; ſuch were all thoſe which concerned external rites and obſervances, as *waſhing of hands and cups*, &c. So that theſe *Pharaiſaical* Traditions had alſo that *unſpeakable* advantage which Mr. *S.* ſays renders their Traditions *unmiſtakeable*, That they were daily practiſed, and came down *clad in ſuch plain matters of Fact, that the moſt ſtupid man living could not poſſibly be ignorant of them.* Therefore, according to Mr. *S*'s Principles, it was impoſſible that any Age of the *Jews* ſhould be perſwaded that theſe things were commanded by *Moſes* and ever ſince obſerved, if they had not been ſo: And yet our *Saviour* denies theſe Cuſtoms to have been of any ſuch Authority as they pretended.

* Ibid. l. 17. c. 3. & de Bell. Jud. l. 1. c. 4. & l. 2. c. 12.

* Antiq. l. 18. c. 2.

§. 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to ſhew the agreement which is between the Traditionary *Jews* and *Papiſts*, their own Writers ſo liberally acknowledging it. Mr. *White* * indeed ſays, That *the Faith of the Jews was not delivered to them Orally, but by Writing*; than which nothing can be more inconſiſtent with his *Hypotheſis*. For if the *Jewiſh Faith* was conveyed to them not *Orally*, but by *Writing*, then either the *Jewiſh* Church had no ſufficient *Rule of Faith*, or elſe a Writing may be ſuch a Rule. But other of their *Champions* make great uſe of the Parallel, between the Traditionary *Jews* and the *Romiſh* Church, to confirm from thence their own Traditionary Doctrines. Cardinal *Perron* hath a full paſſage to this purpoſe; *As this* (ſays he *) *is to preſerve a ſound and entire reſpect to the Majeſty of the ancient Moſaick Scripture, to believe and obſerve not onely all the things which are therein actually contained, but*

* De Did. & Theol. Tract. 1. Sect. 6.

* Rep. to K. James, obſerv. 3. c. 4.

*but also those things which are therein contained mediately and relatively, as the Doctrines of Paradise, &c. which were not contained therein but mediately, and by the authority which it gave to the deposition of the Patriarchal and Mosaick Tradition, preserved by heart, and in the Oral Doctrine of the Synagogue: So this is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the Majesty of the Apostolical Scripture, to believe and observe all the things which it contains, not onely immediately and by it self but mediately and by reference to the Apostolical Traditions, to which in gross and generally it gives the Authority of Apostolical Doctrines, and to the Church the Authority of Guardian and Depositary to preserve and attest them.* *Voysin* in his *Observations* upon *Raymundus Martyn*, * tells us, *That as in the Old Law the great Consistory at* Jerusalem *was the foundation of the true Tradition, so* (says he) *the See of* Rome *is the foundation of our Tradition. And as the continual succession of the High Priests and Fathers among the Jews was the great confirmation of the Truth of their Traditions, so* (says he) *with us the Truth of our Catholick Doctrine is confirmed by a continual succession of Popes.*

* Pugio Fid. p. 145.

§. 3. From all this it appears, that the *Pharisees* among the *Jews* made the same pretence to *Oral Tradition* which the *Papists* do at this day according to Mr. *S.* And if so, then Mr. *S*'s Demonstration *à Posteriori* is every whit as strong for the *Jews* against our *Saviour*, as it is for the *Papist* against the *Protestants.* For we find that in our *Saviour*'s time, it was then *the present perswasion of the Traditionary* Jews,*that their Faith*, and their Rites,and the true sense and interpretation of their written Law was *descended from* Moses *and the* Prophets *to them uninterruptedly*; *which we find was most firmly rooted in their hearts.* But the *Jews* had constant Tradition among them, that the Messiah was to be a great temporal Prince: And though the Letters of the Prophecies concerning him, might well enough have been accommodated to the low and suffering condition of our Saviour; yet they did *Infallibly* know that their Messiah was to be another kind of person) from *sense written in their hearts*,from the interpretation of those Prophecies Orally brought down to them *from the Patriarchal and Mosaick Tradition preserved by heart and in the Oral Doctrine of the Synagogue, and from the living voice of* their *Church essential*, that is,the universal consent of the then Traditionary *Jews.* If it be said, That the Jewish Tradition did indeed bring down several Doctrines not contained in Scripture, of *Paradise*, of *Hell*, of the *last Judgment*, of *the Resurrection*, &c. (as Cardinal *Perron* affirms) but it did not bring down this *Point of the Messiah's being a Temporal Prince:* Then as Mr. *S.* * asks us,so the *Jew* does him; *By what virtue Tradition brought down these other Points? and whether the same virtue were not powerful to bring down* this *as well as those?* Then he will ask him farther, *Is there not a necessary connexion and relation between a constant Cause, and its formal Effect? So that if its formal Effect be Points received as delivered ever, the proper Cause must be an ever-delivery; whence he will argue from such an Effect to its Cause for any particular Point, and consequently for* this *Point that is in Controversie between* Jews *and* Christians, concerning the Messiah's being a Temporal Prince, *in case it be a Point held ever delivered*; but most certain it is, it was so held by the *Jews* in our Saviour's time,and hath been held so ever since to this day.

* P. 76.

I shall not trouble the *Reader* with transcribing the rest of this Demonstration, onely desire him as he reads it over, to imagine instead of Mr. *S.*

*S.* a *Pharisee*, demonstrating against one of *Christ's* Disciples the Infallibility of the *Oral Tradition* of the *Jews:* And I doubt not but he will find this *Demonstration*, and every part of it (changing only the Names) as forcibly concluding *Christ* not to be the *Messiah*, as it doth infer any point of *Popery* against the *Protestants*.

§. 4. Before I leave this *Instance* of the *Jewish Tradition*, I shall briefly consider what Mr. *White* * hath offered by way of answer to it; as, *First*, That the *matter* of these Traditions is nothing else but *Explications of Scripture framed and invented by their own Rabbines*. So we say, that the Popish Traditions are Innovations. But then Mr. *White*, and Mr. *S.* tell us, That they can demonstrate them to be descended from *Christ* and his *Apostles*, because it is the present Perswasion of a multitude of Christians that they are so descended. In like manner, if this Demonstration be good, the *Jews* can prove their Traditions to be descended from *Moses* and the *Prophets*. *Secondly*, He says, that the *form of these Traditions is more ridiculous than the Canting of Gypsies, or the jugling of Hocus-pocus, because it consists in inventing the sense of the Scripture from the mysteries, and numbers, and changes of Letters*. This is a gross inexcusable mistake. For though the *Jews* have such a *Cabala* (called *Gematry*) as this which Mr. *White* describes; yet that *Cabala* which is argued in this *Instance*, and which our Saviour reproves in the *Pharisees* by the name of Tradition, is quite another thing, and among the Jewish Writers known by the name of the *Unwritten or Oral Law*; which they say was delivered to *Moses* on Mount *Sinai* and by him conveyed to *Aaron* and *Joshua*, and the *Elders*, and successively delivered down from one Age to another; and at last by *Rabbi Jehudah* compiled into one Volume, which they call *Mishna*, or δευτέρωσις. And this does not consist in the Art of Numbring, Combining, or changing of Letters, as Mr. *White* imagines. But suppose it did so, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be; the *Instance* would be so much the more conclusive against them, if what they affirm be true, That *Oral Tradition* is infallible, and that the perswasion of a Traditionary Church in any Age, that such a Doctrine descended to them from *Christ* or *Moses*, be a demonstration that it did so: For if this be sufficient evidence, 'tis nothing to the purpose what the Doctrine be either for *matter* or *form*: For if it be once demonstrated to have come from *Christ* or *Moses*, it is without any farther dispute to be received as of Divine authority. So that Mr. *White* quite alters the state of the question; which was not whether the Jewish *Cabala* be absurd and ridiculous, but whether the general perswasion of the *Jews* in any Age, that it descended to them by uninterrupted Tradition from *Moses*, be a demonstration that it did so. If it be then the Jewish *Cabala* is as demonstratively of Divine Authority as the Oral Doctrine of the Papists. *Thirdly*, He says, *This Cabala was a Doctrine delivered to few, and that with strict charge to keep it from Publicity, and so communicate it again successively to a select Committee of a few, wherein* (says he) *you may see as fair an opportunity for jugling and couzenage, as in our case there is an impossibility*. This I think is true of the *Cabala*, which (it seems) Mr. *White* had onely in his view, but is a horrible mistake if he speak of the Oral Law which was contained in the *Mishna*, and which this *Instance* onely intends. For of this *Maimonides* * says expresly, *That in every Age, from the time of* Moses *to* Rabbi Jehudah, *who compiled the* Mishna, *the Oral Law was publickly taught:* And

* Apol. 12, &c.

* In Præfat. Sum. Talmud.

*And that after* Rabbi Jehudah *had compiled it into one Volume, the Israelites did generally write out Copies of it, and it was every where carefully taught, for fear lest the Oral Law should by forgetfulness be lost among the Jews.* So that upon account of the publickness of the Doctrine, there is as *great an impossibility of Jugling and Couzenage in the case* of the *Jewish* as of the *Romish* Tradition. Besides, was *washing of Hands and Cups*, which they also pretended to have come down to them from *Moses*, and to have been constantly practised in every Age, a secret thing? Was it not a *practical* Tradition, and performed in a sensible matter? If therefore no Age can conspire to impose upon the next in a plain custom; and if an universal Tradition of such a thing cannot come in without such a conspiracy: How could this be the perswasion of any Age, that *washing of Hands*, &c. was prescribed by *Moses* and practised in all Ages, if it had not truly been so?

§. 5. *Secondly*, As for *Instances* among *Christians*, whereof many remain yet upon Record; as namely, the various and opposite Traditions about the *time of Easter*, and concerning the *Baptism of Hereticks*; and the Apostolical Tradition (as St. *Austin* calls it) concerning *the admission of Infants to the Communion*; all which have been frequently urged in this Controversie, and none of them yet sufficiently answered; I shall to avoid tediousness, passing by these, insist onely upon that of the *Chialists*; which in *Justin Martyr*'s time was the perswasion of all Orthodox Christians, that is (in Mr. *S*'s Dialect) of all the *holders to Tradition.* For if notwithstanding the perswasion of that Age, that this Doctrine was descended to them from the Apostles, it was not really so descended; then the perswasion of Christians in any Age, that a Doctrine was brought down to them from the Apostles, is no Demonstration that it was so.

§. 6. To this *Instance* Mr. *White* answers * by telling us, that *Eusebius* says that this Tradition sprang from *Papias*, (*a good but a credulous and simple man*) who it seems was mistaken in saying that it was the Apostles Doctrine. But for all this, *Justin Martyr* says he was received by all *Orthodox Christians* in his Time, as a Doctrine descended to them from the Apostles. And if *Justin* said true, nothing can make more against their Demonstration of the Infallibility of Tradition, than the natural consequence from these two sayings of *Eusebius* and *Justin*, which is this, That the mistake of one simple and credulous Man may in an Age or two give occasion to the universal entertainment of a Doctrine, as descended down to them from Christ and his Apostles, when there was no such matter. Hath not Mr. *White* now done his *Rule of Faith* great service by this Answer? But it is according to his manner in all his Writings, to say any thing to remove a present Objection, though never so much to the prejudice of his main *Hypothesis*; than which I do not know any quality in a *Writer* which doth more certainly betray the want either of Judgment, or of Sincerity, or of a good Cause.

* Apol. p. 78, 79, &c.

§. 7. And whereas he says *, *That* Irenæus *his testimony proves it to be no Tradition; for he sets down the supposed words of our Saviour, which plainly shews it is a Story, not a Tradition; a Tradition being a sense delivered not in set words, but setled in the Auditors hearts by hundreds of different*

* Apol. p. 81.

*different expressions explicating the same meaning.* When I consider this passage of Mr. *White*, I confess I cannot complement him, and say (as he makes his *Nephew* do in the *Dialogue* * between them) *I cannot but applaud your Discourse, it hath so pleasing and attractive a countenance.* And again *, *I am not able to oppose what you say by any weighty Objection, your Arguments being not only strong and nervous, but of so comely and winning a complexion*, &c. I cannot (I say) speak all this of his present Argument. But I may deservedly apply to it the last part of his *Nephew's* Complement, That it is an Argument so framed, *as if without any evidence of its consequence it would perswade men to believe it.* But to return an Answer to this passage: It seems (according to Mr. *White*) that *Irenæus* was mistaken in the very nature of Tradition: and if so learned a *Father* was ignorant in the common *Rule of Faith, what can we* (to use Mr. *S*'s words *) *undertakingly promise to weaker heads?* Mr. *S.* instanceth in the *Creed*, and *Ten Commandments*, as the principal Traditions which Parents teach their Children; but now Mr. *White* can shew plainly that these are no *Traditions* but *Stories*, because *Tradition is a sense delivered not in set words*, &c. As if Christ and his Apostles could deliver no Doctrine unless they expressed the same thing an hundred several ways. But suppose they did so (which no man hath any reason to imagine, because a thing may be expressed as plainly by one way as by an hundred) can no man deliver this Tradition who speaks it in any one of those expressions? If one should employ his Servant to carry a Message, and (because Mr. *White* thinks this necessary) should settle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the same thing in an hundred several expressions; and the Servant should go and deliver this Message in one of those very expressions that his Master used to him, and should say these were his Masters very words; would not this be well enough?

No, if he had come to such a Philosopher as Mr. *White*, he would soon have given him to understand that he was not fit to bring a Message, or to be credited in it, who had so little wit as not to know that a Message is a thing not to be delivered *in set-words.* And now I would entreat Mr. *White* to reconcile himself in this matter to his Friends. Mr. *Rushworth* says *, *'Tis impossible to put fully and beyond all quarrel the same sense in divers words:* Which if it be true, I would fain know what certain course Mr. *White* can prescribe *to explicate the same meaning by hundreds of different expressions*, and consequently how Tradition can be infallibly conveyed *by setling the sense of it in the Auditors hearts* by such variety of expressions. Mr. *Cressy* * likewise (a zealous Assertor of Tradition) does affirm, *That the Primitive Churches were even to excess scrupulous in maintaining the very phrases of Traditionary Doctrines*; which (according to Mr. *White*) *plainly shews* these Doctrines *to be stories, not Traditions, because Tradition is a sense delivered not in set-words.* The same *Author* complains, * *That few among their learnedst Masters of Controversie, propose the Points to be disputed between them and the Protestants, in the Language of the Church.* By which I suppose he does not mean, that these Controvertists were to blame in that they did not *settle the sense of those Points by hundreds of different expressions explicating* the same meaning, but that they did not keep to the words wherein the Church had in Councils or otherwise (if there be any other way) declared her sense of those Points. Again *he* * says, That *St. Paul, referring to the Doctrine settled*

* *Rushworth* Dial. [illegible]
* Ibid. [illegible]
* P. [illegible]
* Dial. [illegible] Sect. [illegible]
* Exomolog. c. [illegible] Sect. 4.
* Ibid. c. [illegible] Sect. 2.
* Ibid. c. 27. Sect. 2.

*settled by Oral Instruction, to shew the uniformity of it every where, calls it a form of wholsome words.* From whence we may conclude either that St. *Paul* did not well to call the Traditionary Doctrine (as Mr. *Cressy* says he does) *a form of words*, or else (which is more probable) that Mr. *White* is mistaken in saying, That *a Tradition is a sense not delivered in set-words.* Farthermore, the same Mr. *Cressy* * tells us, That St. *Augustine* was careful *not only to deliver Traditional Truths themselves, but the terms also in which those Truths were conveyed to his Times.* But now Mr. *White* could have informed St. *Augustine*, that this officious care of his was not only superfluous, but pernicious to Tradition.

* Ibid. c.28. Sect. 1.

§. 8. But to return to *Justin*'s Testimony; to which the Sum of Mr. *White*'s answer, is, That *Justin esteem'd it not as a point necessary to salvation; but rather a piece of Learning higher than the common: Since he both acknowledges other Catholicks held the contrary, and entitles those of his perswasion* κτ' πάντα ὀρθογνώμονας *right in all opinions*, that is, *wholly of his own mind.* It is not material to my purpose; whether or no *Justin* look'd upon this *as a point necessary to Salvation*, so long as it is evident that he looked upon it as a Divine Revelation, and part of the Christian Doctrine. And yet it seems he thought it a point of more than ordinary importance, because he joyns it with the Doctrine of the *Resurrection*, and says that it was not disowned by any but those who also denied the Resurrection. But whereas Mr. *White* says that *Justin acknowledges other Catholicks to have held the contrary*, I hope to make it evident from the scope and *series* of his Discourse, that he acknowledges no such thing; but that the plain design of his Discourse, is to shew that this Doctrine was owned by all true Christians. For when *Trypho* asks him *, Whether the Christians did indeed believe that *Jerusalem should be rebuilt*, &c. He returns him this answer, *I am not such a Wretch as to speak otherwise than I think. I have told thee before that my self and many others (as ye all know) are of the mind that this will come to pass. But, not many indeed of those Christians who, are* [not] *of the pure and pious perswasion, do not own this, I have intimated to thee.* That the negative particle (though omitted in the Copy) ought to be thus inserted, will be clear to any one that considers what follows. For after he had spoken of those who disown this Doctrine, he immediately adds by way of farther description of them, that tho' they are called Christians, yet in Truth they are not Christians, in these words; *For of these* (*viz.* the Disowners of this Doctrine) *who are called indeed Christians, but are Atheistical and Impious Hereticks, I have shewed thee that they teach in all points Blasphemous, Atheistical and Absurd things. But that ye may know that I do not say this for you only, I will, according to my ability, compile all these Discourses which have past between us into one piece; in which I will by Writing make Profession of this very thing which I now declare to you. For I do not choose to follow men or the Doctrines of men, but God and such Doctrines as are from him. And though ye may have conversed with some who are called Christians, and yet do not acknowledge this; but even dare to blaspheme the God of* Abraham, *and the God of* Isaac, *and the God of* Jacob; *who also say that there is no Resurrection of the dead, but that so soon as they dye their Souls are received into Heaven: Do not count these men Christians; no more than a man, that considers things rightly, would own the* Sadduces, *and such like Sects, to be* Jews, &c. *But I my self, and as many Christians as are throughly of the right perswasion, do both know that there*

* Dial. cum *Tryph.* p. 306. Edit. Lutet. 1615.

*shall be a Resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in* Jerusalem *which shall be built, adorned and enlarged*, &c. Can any thing be plainer than that *Justin* endeavours by this Discourse to satisfie *Trypho*, that this *Point* they were speaking of was a *Divine Doctrine*, and owned to be so by all Christians; except such as did onely bear the Name and Title of Christians, but were indeed blasphemous Hereticks and deniers of the Resurrection? By which Character that he intends to describe the impious Sects of the *Gnosticks*, will appear by and by. So that Mr. *White* must either allow the inserting of the *negative Particle* (which Mr. *Mede* * proves to have been omitted in the Copy) or else acknowledge that those who are *Christians only in Name, but in Truth are impious blasphemous and absurd Hereticks*, may properly be said to be of the pure and pious Opinion of the Christians. And if onely these be the *other Catholicks*, whom Mr *White* says *Justin acknowledges* to have *held contrary* to the *Millenaries*, I am contented he should make his best of them. If Mr. *White* should blame the inserting of the *negative Particle* [*not*] into *Justin's* Text, as too great a boldness with the *Fathers*; it were easily answered, that the sense evidently requires it. And in such a case it is no boldness, but such a liberty as the most Learned of their own Interpreters and Commentators upon the Fathers do frequently take. And for Mr. *S.* if he takes offence at this, one may with reason (since the exigency of the sense plainly requires the inserting of it) demand of him (what he * unreasonably does of us in relation to all the *affirmative Propositions of Scripture*) *to demonstrate that the Particle* [not] *was not left out* of this Clause of *Justin*, by those who Transcribed the Book. But besides the exigency of the sense in this place; that the *negative* ought to have been inserted, will appear by the reference which *Justin* makes in this *passage* to something foregoing in the same *Dialogue*. *I have* (says he) *declared to thee before, that my self and many others are of the mind that this will come to pass. But, that many indeed of those Christians, who are* [not] *of the pure and pious perswasion, do not own this, I have intimated to thee. For of these, who are called indeed Christians but are Atheistical and impious Hereticks, I have shewed thee that they teach in all Points Blasphemous, Atheistical, and Absurd things.* In these words he plainly refers to some precedent passage, which if it can be found will be a certain Key to open to us the sense of this place. I know that Mr. *Mede* * (perhaps not observing it) thought that passage to have been fraudulently expunged by the Enemies of the *Millenary Opinion*: But it seems to me to be still extant. For I find towards the beginning of this *Dialogue*, after that *Justin* had endeavoured to prove at large out of Scripture this glorious coming of Christ, and to refute those who applied the *Texts* produced by him to that purpose to *Hezekiah*, and to *Solomon* whose falling off to Idolatry he occasionally mentions; whereupon *Trypho* objects to him, that many who were called *Christians*, did also communicate in the Idol-Feasts. To this, *I say*, I find *Justin* returning to this answer *: *First*, He denies not that there are such as these *who own themselves Christians, and confess the Crucified Jesus to be both Lord and Christ, and yet teach not his Doctrines, but the Doctrines of seducing spirits.* But, says he, *We who are the Disciples of the true and pure Doctrine of Jesus Christ, are from this very thing the more strengthened in our Faith, and become more confirmed in the Hope which by him hath been declared to us. For now we see those things visibly and effectually accomplish'd which he before hand told us would be done in his Name. For he said, Many shall come in*

*my*

* Nov. Edit. p. 664.

* P. 31.

* Ibid.

* P. 253.

*my Name*, &c. By which *Hope* any one that reads the Antecedents and Consequents will plainly see that *Justin* means the *Hope* of the *Millennium* (which he had been speaking of before) and consequently of the *Resurrection*, which he looked upon as having a strict Connexion with the Doctrine of the *Millennium*, because (as he tells us afterwards) *this Doctrine* was denied by none but such as also denied the *Resurrection*. And of these men his description runs on in these words, πολλοὶ, &c. *Many* (saith he) *both are and have been, that have come in the name of Jesus, and taught both to speak and do Atheistical and Blasphemous things*; *and are by us denominated from those men from whom each of their Doctrines and Opinions had its rise* (namely as it follows, *Marcionites*, *Valentinians*, &c.) *and all these in their several ways teach men to Blaspheme the Creator of the Universe, and the Christ whose Coming was foretold by him, and the God of* Abraham, Isaac *and* Jacob. *But we have no Communion with them, as knowing them to be Atheistical and Impious*, &c. This passage in hand, when I compare it with the Text before quoted, and consider the words and characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very same that he refers to in those words, *I have declared to thee, I have intimated to thee, &c.* If so, the matter in Controversie is clear, that the Doctrine of the *Millennium* was universal. If it be not the same, I could wish to be shew'd some other place in this *Dialogue*, where *Justin* makes any such *Declaration* or *Intimation*. In the mean while by comparison of these places, it is evident there are but two sorts of men that *Justin* speaks of. *First*, Who believe the *Millennium*; *We the Disciples* * *of the true and pure Doctrine*, &c. *viz. My self and many others*; again, *my self and as many Christians as are thoroughly* * *of the right Perswasion. Secondly*, Who deny the *Millennium*; *Many Christians*, saith *Justin*; but what Christians? *Of a right perswasion*? *That*, saith he, *I have signified before.* τὰς γὰρ, &c. *For I have shewed thee of them who are called Christians, but are indeed Atheists and Impious Hereticks, that they teach Blasphemous and Atheistical and Absurd things*: And true it is, he did *shew* before that those who denyed the *Millennium* were *many in number, and were called Christians*, &c. *but were Teachers of Blasphemous and Atheistical things*, &c. *and known to be Atheists and Impious*, &c. But he *shewed* it of none other besides these. So that if this Doctrine were likewise denyed by *many Christians of the pure and pious perswasion*, then *Justin Martyr* had fouly forgot himself. But if not, then it is plain that the Transcribers have wronged *Justin* by leaving out a *Negative* which ought to have been inserted. It is worth observing by the way how Mr. *White* pleases himself with false and frivolous Criticisms upon the words, πολλοὺς & ὀρθογνώμονες. False they are, as Mr. *White* shall know if he desires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are rendered by my preceding Discourse; for which reason I say no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter (as M. *S.* * warily suggests) not to *engage* himself, nor be *hook't* by others, out of his own *infallible way*, but leave it wholly to the * *Bird-witted* Hereticks (as Mr. *S.* calls them) to *perch upon the specifical natures* of Words, as he does *of Things*.

* τῆς ἀληθινῆς καὶ καθαρᾶς διδασκαλίας.
* ὀρθογνώμονες.
* P. 68.
* P. 69.

§. 9. Besides these *Instances* I have given of Doctrines and Practices which Mr. *S* cannot deny to have been innovated, I might instance likewise in the chief *Points* of Popery, and shew that for all their pretence to *Tradition*, they are really *Innovations*. But because this would engage me in tedious Disputes about particular *Points*, I will only single out one of

of their most fundamental *Doctrines*, viz. that of *Transubstantiation*; concerning which I shall shew that, notwithstanding it is the universal perswasion of the present *Roman* Church, yet they have not, nor can have any assurance that it was the Doctrine of Christ, and that it is descended to them by an uninterrupted Tradition. I shall not at all contend against the word *Transubstantiation* (which is generally acknowledged to be new) but only the thing signified by it, a substantial change of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. And this I might shew at large not to have been the Doctrine of the ancient *Fathers*. But because Mr. *White*, and Dr. *Holden*, and Mr. *Cressy* do so frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a Traditionary Doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publickly held by any Catholick who continued afterwards uncensured,and in the Communion of the Church: Therefore I shall content my self at present with one clear *Testimony*, and that of a very eminent *Person* in the Church, St. *Theodoret*, concerning whom Pope *Leo* (in an Epistle to him, at the end of *Theodoret*'s Works) gives this Testimony, That *in the Judgment of the Apostolick See he was free from all stain of Heresie.* The passage I intend is in his *Dialogues*, between a *Catholick* under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and *Eranistes* who sustained the person of an *Heretick*. *Eranistes* * maintaining that the Body of Christ was changed into the substance of the Divinity, he illustrates it by this similitude. *As* (says he) *the Symbols of the Lord's Body and Blood are one thing before the invocation of the Priest; but after the Invocation, are changed and do become another thing: So the Body of our Lord, after his Ascension, is changed into the Divine substance.* To which *Orthodoxus* returns this answer, *Thou art caught in thine own Net. Because the mystical Symbols after Consecration do not pass out of their own Nature; for they remain in their former substance, figure and appearance, and may be seen and handled even as before.* He does not onely in express words deny the substance of the Symbols to be changed, but the occasion upon which these words are brought in, and the scope of them (if they be of any force against the *Heretick*'s illustration) renders them uncapable of any other sense. When Mr. *S.* hath answered this *Testimony*, I have more for him.

* Dialog. 2.

That which I mainly urge against this *Doctrine* is, the monstrous Absurdities and Contradictions contained in it, together with the necessary consequence of them. Several of the *Absurdities* of it are well brought together by *Scotus* *, who tells us, That to prove the possibility of Christ's *Body* being contained under the *species* of *Bread* and *Wine*, many things must be proved which seem to involve a Contradiction; as 1. *That one quantum* (or extended Body) *may be together in the very same place with another.* 2. *That a less quantum may be together in the same place with a greater*; i. e. a Body of less extension may occupy not onely the same, but as much room as a Body of greater extension does; which is to say no more but this, that a Body less than another may be as great as that other even whil'st it is less than it. 3. *That a greater quantum may be together with every part of a less quantum*, i. e. a Body that is greater than another, may be as little as the least part of that other body which is less than it. 4. *That a subject may be without quantity*, i. e. there may be a body which hath no kind of Magnitude. 5. That a body may be somewhere where it was not before without changing its place, *i. e.* a Body may be removed to another place, whilst it remains still in the same place. 6. *That a quantum may be without any quantitative Mode*, i. e.

* Distinct. l. 4 dist. 10. qu. 1. n. 3.

a

a Body may be extended without any manner of extension. *The possibility of all which*, he saith (and I am very much of his mind) *it would be too tedious a work to prove*; and therefore he only attempts to prove *the two last*, which (in all reason) is work enough for one man. All these *seeming* Contradictions (as he modestly calls them) are by his own acknowledgment involved in this Doctrine. To these I might add many more; as, How a thing can be said to be changed into another thing which did exist before? How a Body can be present in a place after the manner of a Spirit? And yet this they affirm concerning the presence of Christ's Body in the Sacrament; one might as well say that Snow is black, but not after the manner of blackness, but in the way of whiteness, which is to talk non-sense after the manner of sense: How the whole Body of Christ can be contained under the least sensible part of the species of Bread, as is generally affirmed: nay, and *Scotus* * adds, that the whole Body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he says expresly, That *the Head and the Foot of the Body of Christ are as far distant from one another in the Sacrament, as they are in Heaven*: as if one should say that a Body, all whose parts lye within the compass of a small pins-heads, may yet within that little compass have parts two yards distant from one another: And lastly, how the sensible *species* of Bread, *e. g. quantity, whiteness, softness*, &c. can exist without any *subject*? To affirm the possibility of which (as generally they do) is to say that there may be quantities *of white and soft nothings*; For this is the plain English of that assertion, *that sensible species may exist without a subject*; which being strip'd of those terms of Art (*species and subject*) that do a little disguise it, it appears to be plain *Non-sense*.

* Ibid. qu. 1. n. 12.

Now the proper and necessary *consequence* of this Doctrine is to take away all certainty, and especially the certainty of sense. For if that which my sight and taste and touch do all assure me to be a little piece of Wafer, may notwithstanding this be Flesh and Bloud, even the whole Body of a Man; then notwithstanding the greatest assurance that Sense can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what Sense reported it to be. If so, then farewell the *Infallibility* of Tradition, which depends upon the certainty of Sense: And which is a worse consequence, if this Doctrine be admitted we can have no sufficient assurance that the Christian Doctrine is a Divine Revelation. For the assurance of that depending upon the assurance we have of the Miracles said to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the assurance we can have of a Miracle depending upon the certainty of our senses; it is very plain that *that* Doctrine which takes away the certainty of Sense, does in so doing overthrow the certainty of Christian Religion. And what can be more vain than to pretend, that a Man may be assured that such a Doctrine is revealed by God, and consequently true, which if it be true, a Man can have no assurance at all of any Divine Revelation? Surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder that any man who considers the natural consequences of this *Doctrine* can be a Papist; unless he have attained to Mr. *Cressy's* pitch of *Learning*, who speaking of the difficult Arguments wherewith this Doctrine was pressed, says * plainly, *I must answer freely and ingenuously, that I have not learned to answer such Arguments, but to despise them*. And if this be a good way, when ever we have a mind to believe any thing, to scorn those Objections against it which we cannot solve

* Exomol. c. 73. Sect. 7.

ſolve; then Chriſtian Religion hath no advantage above the vileſt Enthuſiaſms; and a *Turk* may maintain *Mahomet* and his *Alcoran* (in oppoſition to *Chriſt* and his *Doctrine*) againſt all that *Grotius*, or any other hath ſaid, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely ſay, *I have not learned to anſwer ſuch Arguments, but to deſpiſe them.*

§. 10. I will add one *Inſtance* more in another kind, to ſhew the uncertainty of *Oral* and *Practical* Traditions, and that ſhall be the Tradition concerning *Pope Jone*; than which ſcarce any was ever more generally received in the *Hiſtorical* kind. Many and great *Authors* affirm it, as *Teſtifiers* of the general Fame. None ever denied it till the *Reformers* had made uſe of it to the diſadvantage of Popery. Since that time not only Papiſts deny it, but ſeveral of our own Writers ceaſe to believe it. *Phil. Bergomenſis* tells the ſtory thus: *Anno* 858. *John the 7th. Pope*, &c. *The Tradition is that this perſon was a Woman*, &c. Here's an *Oral Tradition.* He concludes thus; *In deteſtation of whoſe filthineſs, and to perpetuate the memory of her Name, the Popes even to this day going on Proceſſion with the People and the Clergy, when they come to the place of her Travel*, &c. *in token of abomination they turn from it, and go a by-way; and being paſt that deteſtable place, they return into the way, and finiſh their Proceſſion.* Here is one *Practical Tradition. And for avoiding of the like miſcarriages, it was decreed that no one ſhould thereafter be admitted into St.* Peter's *Chair* priuſquam per foratam ſedem futuri Pontificis genitalia ab ultimo Diacone Cardinale attractarentur: Here is another with a Witneſs * *Sabellicus* relates the ſame; and moreover ſays that this *Porphyry Chair was* in his time *to be ſeen in the Popes Palace.* He adds indeed that *Platina thinks that this Tradition of Pope* Jone *was not faithfully delivered to Poſterity. But however* (ſays he) *ſuch a Tradition there is* Concerning the *firſt Practical Tradition*, *Platina* ſays that *he may not deny it.* For the *ſecond*, he thinks *the Chair rather deſign'd for a Stool* for another uſe, *&c.* He concludes, *Theſe things which I have related are commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obſcure Authors: Therefore I reſolved* (ſays he) *briefly and nakedly to ſet them down, leſt I ſhould ſeem too obſtinately and pertinaciouſly to have omitted that which almoſt all affirm.* It is no wonder that he ſays the *Authors* of this Report were *uncertain and obſcure*, ſince ſo very few writ any thing in that Age. But ſuppoſe none had writ of it, ſo long as he acknowledges it to have been a *general Oral Tradition* atteſted by a ſolemn and conſtant *Practice*, it has (according to Mr. *S*'s Principles) greater certainty than if it had been brought down to us by a hundred Books written in that very Age. So that here's an *Oral* and *Practical Tradition*, continued we are ſure for ſome hundreds of years, preſerved and propagated by a ſolemn *Practice* of the *Popes, Clergy* and *People* of *Rome* in their *Proceſſions*, and by a *notorious Cuſtom* at the *Election* of every *Pope*; and in a matter of ſo great importance to their Religion (the honour of the See of *Rome*, and the uninterrupted Succeſſion from St. *Peter* being ſo nearly concerned in it) that, had it been falſe, they had been obliged under pain of Damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have uſed all means to have diſcovered the falſity of it. Therefore Mr. *S.* is bound by his own Principles either to allow it for a Truth, or elſe to give an account when and how it began; which may poſſibly be made out by *We Metaphyſicians* (as he * ſtyles himſelf, and his *Scientifical Brethren*) but I aſſure him it is paſt the skill of * *Note-Book Learning.*

* Ennead. 9. L. 1.

* P. 340.

* P. 337.

## SECT. X.

The fourth Answer to his second Demonstration.

§. 1. IT is not the present perswasion of the *Church of Rome*, nor ever was, that their Faith hath descended to them by *Oral Tradition* as the sole *R[illegible]* of it. And this being proved, the *Supposition* upon which his *Demonstration* is built falls to the ground.

And for the proof of this, I appeal to that * *Decree* of the *Council* of *Trent*, in which they declare, That because the *Christian Faith and Discipline are contained in written Books and unwritten Traditions*, &c. *therefore they do receive and honour the Books of Scripture and also Tradition* [pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia] *with equal pious affection and reverence*; which I understand not how those do, who set aside the Scripture, and make Tradition the sole Rule of their Faith. And consonantly to this *Decree*, the general Doctrine of the *Romish* Church is, that *Scripture and Tradition* make up the *Rule of Faith*. So the *Roman Catechism* (set forth by order of the Council of *Trent*) says, * that *the sum of the Doctrine delivered to the Faithful is contained in the Word of God, which is distributed into Scripture and Tradition*. *Bellarmine* * speaks to the same purpose, *That the Scripture is a Rule of Faith, not an entire but partial one. The entire Rule is the Word of God, which is divided into two partial Rules, Scripture, and Tradition.* According to this, the adequate Rule of Faith is the *Word* of *God*; which is contained partly in *Scripture*, and partly in the *Tradition* of the Church. And that *Scripture* is look'd upon by them as the *principal* Rule and *primary* foundation of their Faith, and *Tradition* as only supplying the defects of Scripture, as to some *Doctrines* and *Rites* not contained in Scripture, must be evident to any one that has been conversant in the chief of their controversial Divines. *Bellarmine* * where he gives the *marks* of a *Divine Tradition* speaks to this purpose, That that which they call a *Divine Tradition* is such a *Doctrine* or *Rite* as is not found in *Scripture*, but embraced by the whole Church; and for that reason believed to have descended from the Apostles. And he tells us farther *, That the Apostles committed all to writing which was commonly and publickly Preached; and that all things are in Scripture, which men are bound to know and believe explicitely: But then he says, that there were other things which the Apostles did not commonly and publickly teach; and these they did not commit to *Writing*, but delivered them only by *word of mouth to the Prelates and Priests and perfect men of the Church.* And these are the Apostolical Traditions he speaks of. Cardinal *Perron* * says, *That the Scripture is the foundation of the Christian Doctrine, either mediately or immediately.* And *that the Authority of unwritten Tradition is founded in general on these sentences of the Apostle*, * *Hold the Traditions*, &c. Again, * *The things which thou hast heard of me among many Witnesses commit to faithful men*, &c. And that *the Authority of the Church to preserve, and especially to declare these, is founded in this Proposition*, viz. * *That the Church is the pillar and ground of Truth.* So that according to him, the *primary Rule of Faith is the Scripture*, in which the Authority of Tradition is founded. Mr. *Knott* * says expresly, *We acknowledge the Holy Scripture to be a most perfect Rule, for as much as a Writing can be a Rule; we only deny that it excludes, either Divine Tradition, though it be unwritten, or an external Judge to keep, to propose, to interpret it*, &c. So that (according to him) *Scripture* is a perfect Rule, only it does not exclude *unwritten Tradition*, &c. By which that he does not understand (as Mr. *S.* does) a con-

* Decret. primum quartæ Sess.

* In præfat.

* De Verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. 12.

* De Verbo Dei non scripto. L. 4. c. 9.

* Ibid c. 11.

* Reply. Obseruat. 3. c. 4.

* 2 Thess. 2. 15.

* 2 Tim. 2. 2.

* 1 Tim. 3. 15.

* Charity maintained. c. 2. Sect. 1.

a concurrent *Oral Tradition* of all the same Doctrines which are contained in *Scripture*, but other Doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he says elsewhere *, *We do not distinguish Tradition from the written Word, because Tradition is not written by any, or in any Book or Writing; but because it is not written in the Scripture or Bible*; *Bellarmine* * also says the same. And as for the *interpreting of Scripture*, he tells us that this is not the Office of a *Rule*, but of a *Judge*. * *There is* (says he) *a great and plain distinction between a Judge and a Rule. For as in a Kingdom the Judge hath his Rule to follow, which are the received Laws and Customs; which are not fit or able to declare, and be Judges to themselves, but that Office must belong to a living Judge: So the Holy Scripture is and may be a Rule, but cannot be a Judge.* Here he makes the *Scripture* as much a Rule for *matters of Faith*, as the *Laws* of the Land are for *Civil matters*. And in his Reply to Mr. *Chillingworth*, he hath a *Chapter* of above 150 Pages, the *Title* whereof is, *Scripture is not the only Rule of Faith*; which (had he with Mr. *S*. believed *Oral Tradition* to be the sole Rule of Faith) had been as absurd as it would be to write a *Book* to prove that *Turks* are not the *onely Christians* in the World. Mr. *Cressy* likewise (not very consistently to himself) lays down this *Conclusion*; * *The entire Rule of Faith is contained not onely in Scripture, but likewise in unwritten Tradition.*

* Reply to Mr. *Chill*. c. 2. Sect. 179.
* De Verbo Dei, &c. L. 4. c. 2.
* Charity maintained. c. 2. Sect. 5.
* Exomol. c. 2[illegible]

§. 2. Now all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. *Rushworth*'s new Rule of Faith. Therefore Mr. *White* says *, *They speak ill who teach that some things are known in the Church from Scripture, some by Tradition.* And Mr. *Holden* (in opposition to those who make Scripture any part of the Rule of Faith) advances one of the most wild and uncharitable Positions that ever I yet met withal, *viz.* * *That if one should believe all the Articles of the Catholick Faith*, &c. *for this reason because he thought they were all expresly revealed in Scripture, or implicitely contained so as they might be deduced from thence, and would not have believed them had he not judged that they might be evinced from Scripture; yet this man could be no true Catholick: Because* (as he tells us afterwards *) *we must receive* the Christian Doctrine *as coming to us by Tradition; for only by this means* (*excluding the Scriptures*) *Christ hath appointed revealed Truths to be received and communicated.* In the mean time Cardinal *Perron* (unless he altered his mind) is in a sad case, who believed the *Authority of Tradition* it self for this reason, because *it was founded in Scripture.*

* Tabul. Suffrag. p. [illegible]
* Analys. Fid. L. 1. c. 6.
* C. 8.

§. 3. And this *fundamental* difference about the *Rule of Faith*, between the *generality* of their *Divines* and Mr. S's *small party*, is fully acknowledged by the Traditionists themselves. Dr. *Holden* says *, That *their Divines who resolve Faith according to the common Opinion, do inevitably fall into that shameful Circle* (of proving the Divine Authority of the Scripture by the Church, and the Infallibility of the Church back again by the Scripture) *because they dare not build their Faith upon the natural evidence and certainty of Tradition.* So that Dr. *Holden*'s way of resolving Faith, is different from the *common Opinion* of their *Divines*, which he says * *does not differ from the Opinion of those who resolve their Faith into the private Spirits*; and this (according to Mr. *White* *) is the very way of the *Calvinists*, and *of the absurdest Sects.* Nay, Mr. *White* says farther *, That he will be content *to suffer all the punishment that is due to*

* L. 1. c. 9
* L. 1. c. 3
* Exetas. p. 7.
* Ibid.

*Calumniators, if the Roman Divines* (he there ſpeaks of) *do not hold the ſame Rule of Faith with the Calviniſts, and all the abſurdeſt Sects.* So that it ſeems that the *Calviniſts*, &c. do not in their *Rule of Faith* differ from the *Papiſts*, but onely from Mr. *White*, Mr. *S.* &c. Now the *Divines* he there ſpeaks of, are the *Cenſors* of Doctrines at *Rome*, according to whoſe advice his *Infallible Holineſs* and the *Cardinals* of the *Inquiſition* do uſually proceed in cenſuring of Doctrines. Concerning theſe *Divines*
* Ib. p. 73. he goes on to expoſtulate in this manner; * *Shall we endure theſe men to ſit as Cenſors and Judges of Faith, who agree with Hereticks in the very firſt*
* P. 144. *Principle which diſtinguiſhes Catholicks from Hereticks?* Again *, *These are thy Gods* O Rome! *upon theſe thou dependeſt, whilſt prating Ignorance triumphs in the Roman College.* And he ſays the ſame likewiſe of the generality of their *School-Divines*, whom he calls *Scepticks*, becauſe they do
* P. 64. not own his *Demonſtrative* way. Inſomuch that he tells us *, *That few*
* P. 149. *ſound parts are left uninfected with this Plague of Scepticiſm* *; *that this is*
* P. 67, 68. *an univerſal Gangrene* *; *that there are but few that go the way of Demonſtration, and theſe are either wearied out, or elſe live retiredly, or deſpair of any remedy of theſe things.* And indeed all along that *Book* he bemoans *himſelf* and *his Traditionary Brethren* as a deſolate and forlorn Party, who have *Truth* on their ſide, but want *Company* and Encouragement.
* P. 101. So he tells us *, *That the true* ſcientifical *Divines dare not profeſs their knowledge, leſt they ſhould be expoſed by the Sophiſters* of their Church *to the deriſion and ſcorn, either of their Judges or of the People.*

§. 4. So that upon examination of the whole matter, it appears that Mr. *S*'s *Demonſtration* proceeds upon a falſe *Suppoſition.* That it is the *perſwaſion* of their *preſent Church*, that *Tradition* is the *ſole Rule of Faith.* For there is no ſuch matter; unleſs Mr. *S.* mean by *their Church* a few private perſons, who are look'd upon by thoſe who have the chief power in their Church as *Heretical*: as we may reaſonably conjecture by the proceedings at *Rome* againſt Mr. *White*; many of whoſe Books are
* Exetaſ. p. 9. there condemned *, as *containing things manifeſtly Heretical, erroneous in the Faith, raſh, ſcandalous, ſeditious, and falſe reſpectively,* &c. And all this done, notwithſtanding that the chief ſubject of thoſe Books is the explication and defence of this moſt *Catholick* Principle, *That Oral Tradition is the onely Rule of Faith.* To ſum up then the whole buſineſs: If nothing be to be owned for Chriſtian Doctrine (as the *Traditioniſts* ſay) but what is the general perſwaſion of thoſe who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the *Roman Catholick* Church; then much leſs can this *Principle* (*That Oral Tradition is the ſole Rule of Faith*) which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole Chriſtian Doctrine, be received as deſcended from *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; ſince it is ſo far from being the general perſwaſion of *that Church at the preſent*, that it has been, and ſtill is generally diſowned. But Mr. *White* has a *ſalvo* for this. For although
* Apol. p. 38. he grant *, That *very many of their School-men maintain that Tradition is neceſſary only for ſome Points, not clearly expreſſed in Scripture, whence* (he ſays) *it ſeems to follow that they build not the whole Body of their Faith upon Tradition*; yet he tells us *there is a vaſt difference betwixt relying on Tradition, and ſaying or thinking we do ſo.* Suppoſe there be; yet I hope that mens ſaying that they do not rely on *Tradition* as their only Rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any mans ſurmiſe to the con-

trary is that they do, though they think and say they do not; which is in effect to say that they do, though we have as much assurance as we can have that they do not. Besides, how is this Rule *self-evident to all, even to the Rude Vulgar as to its ruling power* (as Mr. *S.* affirms it is) when the greatest part even of the *Learned* among them *think* and *say* that it is not the *only Rule*? But Mr. *White* endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a * *similitude*, which is to this sense; As the *Scepticks* who deny *this Principle, That Contradictions cannot be true at once*, yet in their lives *and civil actions proceed as if they owned it*: So the *Schoolmen*, though they deny Tradition to be the onely Rule of Faith, yet by resolving their Faith into the Church which owns this *Principle*, they do also in practice own it though they say they do not. So that the generality of learned *Papists* are just such *Catholicks* as the *Scepticks* are *Dogmatists*, that is a company of absurd People that confute their *Principles* by their *Practice*. According to this reasoning, I perceive the *Protestants* will prove as good *Catholicks* as any, for they do only *think* and *say* that *Tradition* is not the *Rule* of Faith; but that they practically relie upon it, Mr. *S.* hath past his word for them: For he assures us * (and we may relie upon a Man that writes nothing but Demonstration) that *if we look narrowly into the bottom of our hearts, we shall discover the natural method of Tradition to have unawares settled our Judgments concerning Faith; however when our other Concerns awake design in us, we protest against it, and seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves to embrace and hold to the mere guidance of the Letter of Scripture.* So that in reality we are as good *Catholicks*, and as true *holders to Tradition* as any *Papist* of them all, at the bottom of our thoughts and in our settled judgment; however we have taken up an humour to *protest* against it, and *may seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves* to be Protestants.

* Ibid. p. 39.

* P. 30. & 31.

§. 5. Thus much may suffice to have spoken to his *two* great *Arguments*; *or * as he (good man) unfortunately calls them Demonstrations*; which yet to say truth are not properly *his*, but the *Authors* of *Rushworth's* Dialogues, the main foundation of which *Book* is the substance of these Demonstrations. Only before I take leave of them, I cannot but reflect upon a passage of Mr. *S's* * wherein he tells his Readers that they are not *obliged to bend their brains to study his Book with that severity as they would do an Euclid*; meaning perhaps one of Mr. *White's Euclids*; for it does not appear by his way of Demonstration that ever he dealt with any other. As for the true *Euclid*, I suppose any one that hath tasted his Writings, will at the reading of Mr. *S's* unbend his *brains* without bidding, and smile to see himself so demurely discharged from a *study* so absurd and ridiculous.

* P. 173.

* P. 163.

## SECT. XI.

§. 1. I Should now take into consideration his Ninth *Discourse*, in which he pretends to *open the incomparable strength of the Churches humane Authority, and the Advantages which accrue to it by the supernatural assistances of the Holy Ghost*: But that there is nothing material in it, which hath not been answered already. Only I desire him to explain, how the supernatural Assistances of the Holy Ghost can (according to his Principles)

Concerning some other advantages of Tradition, &c.

ples) add to our assurance of the certainty of Tradition. Because we can have no greater certainty of the supernatural Assistance of the Holy Ghost, than we have that there is an Holy Ghost, and of this we can have no certainty (according to Mr. S.) but by Tradition, which conveys this Doctrine to us. And if Tradition of it self can infallibly assure us that there are supernatural Assistances of the Holy Ghost, then a Man must know that Tradition is infallible antecedently to his knowledge of any supernatural Assistance. And if so, what can any supernatural Assistance add to my assurance of the certainty of Tradition, which I do suppose to be infallible before I can know of any supernatural Assistance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build first all our certainty of the Assistance of the Holy Ghost upon the certainty of Tradition, and then afterwards to make the certainty of Tradition to relie upon the Assistance of the Holy Ghost? As if that could contribute to our assurance of the certainty of Tradition, which unless Tradition be first supposed certain, is it self wholly uncertain.

§. 2. The Conclusion of this Ninth *Discourse* is somewhat Ecstatical; possibly from a sudden disorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to see what a *Man* he has made himself (with the help of *Rushworth's Dialogues*) or rather what his *Party* has made him by the *Office* they put upon him: For it seems (by his telling) * Mr. *Cressy* and the rest are ordained to cajole the *Fools*, *leaving him the way of Reason and Principles*; and that himself is chosen out to Demonstrate to the *Wise*, or *those who judge of* things *per altissimas causas*. In the discharge of which glorious Office, he declares that he *intends no Confutation of those Authors* which Mr. *Cressy* and others have medled with: *Yet if any will be so charitable as to judge he hath solidly confuted* them, *because he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown all their Arguments*, &c. he shall rejoyce and be thankful. That the * *intelligent Reader (for he writes to none but such)* may also rejoyce with him; I shall recite the whole passage, for it is thick of Demonstration, and as likely as any in his Book to have the *altissimas causas* contained in it.

* P. 165. & 166.

* P. 159.

§. 3. * *It would require a large Volume to unfold particularly how each virtue contributes to shew the inerrable indefidiency of Tradition, and how the Principles of almost each Science are concerned in demonstrating its Certainty:* Arithmetick *lends her Numbring and Multiplying Faculty, to scan the vast Number of Testifiers*; Geometry *her Proportions to shew a kind of infinite strength of Certitude in Christian Tradition, above these Attestations which breed Certainty in humane Affairs*; Logick *her skill to frame and make us see the connexions it has with the Principles of our Understanding*; Nature *her Laws of Motion and Action*; Morality *her first Principle that nothing is done* gratis *by a Cognoscitive Nature, and that the Body of Traditionary Doctrine is most conformable to Practical Reason:* Historical Prudence *clears the Impossibility of an* undiscernable *revolt from Points so descended and held so Sacred:* Politicks *shew this to be the best way imaginable to convey down such a Law as it concerns every man to be skilful in*; Metaphysicks *engages the Essences of Things, and the very notion of* Being *which fixes every Truth, so establishing the scientifical Knowledges which spring from each particular Nature by their first Causes or Reasons exempt from changes or motion.* Divinity *demonstrateth it most worthy* God, *and most conducive to bring Mankind to Bliss.* *Lastly,*

* P. 93.

*Lastly*, Controversie *evidences the total uncertainty of any thing concerning Faith if this can be uncertain, and makes use of all the rest to establish the certainty of this* First Principle. A very fit conclusion for such *Demonstrations* as went before. It is well Mr. *S. writes to none but intelligent Readers*; for were it not a thousand pities, that so manly, and solid, and convincing a discourse as this should be cast away upon Fools?

## SECT. XII.

§. 1. AS for his *Corollaries*, supposing them to be rightly deduced from his former Discourses, they must of necessity fall with them. For they signifie nothing but upon this supposition that his foregoing Discourses are true. And yet this being granted, it were easie to shew that most of them are grosly faulty. For *First*, Several of them are plainly coincident. The *second*, *viz. None can with right pretend to be a Church, but the followers of Tradition*, is the very same in sense with the 11*th*, viz. *No company of men hang together like a Body of a Christian Commonwealth or Church, but that which adheres to Tradition.* So likewise the 12*th* and 14*th* are contained in the 15*th*: The 16*th* and 17*th*, in the 19*th*: The 16*th*, 17*th*, 18*th*, and 19*th* in the 21*st*. And the 32*d* and 34*th* in the 31*st*. *Secondly*, Divers of them are manifestly absurd, as the 12*th*, 13*th*, 14*th*, 16*th*, 17*th*, 18*th*, 19*th*, the sum of which is, That there is *no arguing against Tradition from Scripture, or the Authority of the Church, or Fathers and Councils, or from History and Testimonial Writings, or from contrary Tradition, or Reason, or any Instances whatsoever*: which is as much as to say, If this *Proposition* be true, *That Tradition is certain*, then it cannot by any kind of Argument be proved to be false. But is this any peculiar Consectary from the truth of this *Proposition*? Doth not the same follow from every Proposition? That if it be true, it cannot be proved to be false; yet no man was ever yet so frivolous, as to draw such a consequence from the supposed truth of any Proposition. His 23*d* also is singularly absurd, That *there is no possibility of arguing at all against Tradition rightly understood, or the living voice of the Catholick Church, with any shew of Reason.* These are large words. It might have contented a reasonable Man to have said, that no good Argument could be brought against it: But he is jealous of his *Hypothesis*, and can never think it safe till it be shot-free; nor will that content him, but it must be also impossible for any one to make a *shew* of shooting at it. This were, I confess, a peculiar priviledge of Mr. *S*'s *Discourses* above other mens, if they were (as he says) by evidence of Demonstration so secured, that not only no substantial Argument could be brought against them, but that even the most subtil *Schoolman* of them all should not be able to come near them with so much as a *videtur quod non.* But it may be he means no more by this *Corollary*, than what he said in the 18*th*, viz. *That no solid Argument from Reason can be brought against Tradition*: If so, then the sense of his 23*d Corollary* must be this, That there is no possibility of arguing at all against Tradition with any *solid shew*, or *substantial shadow* of Reason; which would be a little inconvenient. I will instance but in one more, his 40*th* which is this, *The knowledge of Traditions Certainty is the first knowledge or Principle in Controversial Divinity*; i. e. *without which nothing is known or knowable in that Science.* Which is to infer, that because he hath with much

Mr. S's Corollaries considered.

pains

pains proved the certainty of Tradition, therefore it is *self-evident*, i. e. needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the present matter in Controversie and that which is the main debate of his *Book* to be the *first Principle* in Controversial Divinity, *i. e.* such a Proposition as every one ought to grant before he can have any right to dispute about it. This is a very prudent course, to make *begging the question* the *first Principle in Controversie*; which would it but be granted, I am very much of his mind that the *method* he takes would be the best way to make *Controversie* a *Science*; because he that should have the luck or boldness to beg first, would have it in his power to make what he pleased certain.

§. 2. Were it worth while, I might farther pursue the Absurdities of his *Corollaries*. For they are not so terrible as he makes shew of, by his telling Dr. *Casaubon* * That *Sure-footing and its Corollaries may put him out of his Wits*: Which though intended for an Affront to the Doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good interpretation; for if the reading of wild and phantastical stuff be apt to disorder a very learned head, then so far Mr. *S*'s saying may have truth in it.

* P. 330.

It remains only that I requite his 41 *Corol.* not with an equal number, but with two or three natural *Consectaries* from the Doctrine of his Book.

*First*, No Man can certainly understand the meaning of any Book whatsoever, any farther than the Contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent *Oral Tradition*. For the Arguments whereby *he* and Mr. *Rushworth* endeavour to prove it impossible without *Tradition* to attain to the certain sense of Scripture, do equally extend to all other Books.

*Secondly*, The memory of matters of Fact done long ago may be better preserved by *general Rumour* than by publick *Records*. For this is the plain English of that Assertion, That Oral Tradition is a better and more secure way of Conveyance than Writing.

*Thirdly*, That the Generality of Papists are no Christians: For if (as he affirms) Tradition be the sole Rule of Faith, and those who disown this Rule be *ipso facto cut off from the Root of Faith*, i. e. unchristian'd; And if (as I have shewn) the Generality of Papists do disown this Rule: Then it is plain that they are no Christians.

THE

# THE RULE OF FAITH:

## PART IV.

### Testimonies concerning the Rule of Faith.

SECT. I.

§. 1. THUS far *in the way of Reason and Principles*. The rest is Note-book Learning, which he tells us * he is *not much a Friend to*; and there is no kindness lost, for it is as little a Friend to him and his Cause as he can be to it. I shall first examine the *Authorities* he brings for *Tradition*; and then produce express *Testimonies* in behalf of *Scripture*. In both which I shall be very brief; in the one, because his Testimonies require no long Answer; in the other, because it would be to little purpose to trouble Mr. S. with many *Fathers*, who for ought appears by his *Book*, is acquainted with none but *Father White*, as I shall shew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the course he uses to take with other mens Testimonies, because it is the only way that a Man in his circumstances can take; otherwise, nothing can be in it self more unreasonable, than to pretend to answer Testimonies by ranking them under so many *faulty Heads*; and having so done, magisterially to require his *Adversary* to vindicate them, by shewing that they do not fall under some of those Heads, though he have not said one word against any of them particularly; nay, though he have not so much as recited any one of them; for then the Trick would be spoiled, and his Catholick Reader who perhaps may believe him in the *general*, might see Reason not to do so if he should descend to *particulars*, which (as he well observes) would make his * *Discourse to look with a contingent Face*.

Mr. S's Testimonies examined.

* P. 337.

* P. 161.

§. 2. I begin with his three *Authorities* from Scripture; which when I consider, I see no reason way he (of all men) should find fault with

* P. 320. my Lord Bishop of *Down*'s *Dissuasive* for being so * *thin and slight in Scripture-Citations*. Nor do I see how he will answer it to Mr. *Rushworth*, for transgressing that prudent *Rule* of his, *viz.* * *That the Catholick should never undertake to convince his Adversary out of Scripture*, &c. For which he gives this substantial Reason, * *because this were to strengthen his Opponent in his own Ground and Principle*, viz. *That all is to be proved out of Scripture*; which he tells us presently after is no more fit to convince, than *a Beetle is to cut withal*; meaning it perhaps of *Texts* so applied as these which follow.* *This shall be to you a direct way, so that Fools cannot err in it.* * *This is my Covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit which is in thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy Seed, and from the mouth of thy Seeds Seed from henceforth for ever.* * *I will give my Law in their bowels, and in their hearts will I write it*: From which *Texts* if Mr. *S.* can prove *Tradition to be the only Rule of Faith*, any better than the *Philosophers Stone* or the *Longitude* may be proved from the *1st Chap.* of *Genesis*, I am content they should pass for valid Testimonies: Though I might require of him (by his own Law) before these *Texts* can signifie any thing to his purpose, to demonstrate that this is the Traditionary sense of these Texts, and that it hath been universally in all Ages received by the Church under that Notion; and then to shew how it comes to pass that so many of the *Fathers*, and of their own *Commentators* have interpreted them to another sense: And *lastly*, to shew how Scripture which has no certain sense but from Tradition, and of the sense whereof Tradition cannot assure us unless it be the *Rule of Faith*; I say, how *Scripture* can prove Tradition to be the *Rule of Faith*, which can prove nothing at all unless Tradition be first proved to be the *Rule of Faith*, This I take to be as *shameful a Circle*, as that wherewith Dr. *Holden* upbraids the generality of his *Brethren*.

* Dial. 2. Sect. 14.

* Ibid.

* Isa. 35. 8.

* Isa. 59. 21.

* Jer. 31.

§. 3. I proceed to his *Authorities* from *Fathers* and *Councils*; all which (not one of them excepted) he hath taken out of Mr. *White*'s *Tabulæ Suffragiales*, without the least acknowledgment from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not consulted the Books themselves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very same errours of Citation which Mr. *White* had been guilty of before him. So that though he is pleas'd to say of himself that * *he is a bad Transcriber*, yet I must do him that right, to assure the Reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

* P. 339.

§. 4. He begins with *Councils*, of which he tells us *he will only mention three in several Ages.*

The first is the *First Synod of Lateran.* One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in several Ages, he should have produced them according to the order of Time, and have begun with the Council of *Sardica*, which was near 300 years before the *Lateran*. But there was a good reason why the *Lateran* should be first produced, *viz.* because it is mentioned before the other in Mr. *White*'s Book. Well, but what says this *Synod*? *We all confess unanimously and consequently, with one heart and mouth, the Tenets and Sayings of the Holy Fathers; adding nothing, substracting nothing of those things which are delivered us by them; and we believe as the Fathers have believed, we preach so as they have taught.* The force of which *Testimony*

Mr.

Mr. *S.* lays upon the Word *delivered*, as if that Word where ever it is met with in *Councils* or *Fathers*, must needs be understood of *oral delivery*; whereas it is a general Word indifferently used for conveyance either by *writing*, or *word of mouth* In this place it plainly refers to the *writings* of particular *Fathers*, out of whom a long catalogue of Testimonies against the Heresie of the *Monothelites* had been read just before this Declaration of the Synod. Now what signifies this to *Oral Traditions* being the *Rule of Faith*, that this Synod declares her Faith, in opposition to the heresie of the *Monothelites*, to be consonant in all things to those Testimonies which had been produced out of the Fathers?

The next is the *Council of Sardica*; out of an *Epistle* of which *Council* he cites these words, *We have received this Doctrine, we have been taught so, we hold this Catholick Tradition, Faith and Confession.* Which are general words, and differently applicable to *Oral Tradition*, or Writing, or both. But be they what they will, Mr. *S.* ought not to have been ignorant, that this Council was rejected by St. *Austin* and other Orthodox Fathers, as * *Binius* acknowledges; and which is more, that the latter part of this *Epistle* (out of which part Mr. *S.* cites these words) which contains a *Confession of Faith*, is by * *Baronius* (and after him by *Binius*) proved to have been surreptitiously added. For though it be found in *Theodoret*, and mentioned by *Sozomen*; yet *Baronius* thinks that it was the *Arian Confession* composed by the *false-Synod* of *Sardica* which sate at the same time; and that *Sozomen* lighting upon it, perhaps mistook it for the Confession of the Orthodox Synod of the same name. However that be, he proves out of *Athanasius*, and from the Testimony both of the Eastern, and Western Bishops, that the Council of *Sardica did not so much as add one word or tittle, no nor so much as explain any thing in the Nicene Faith.* But Mr. *White* says nothing of this, and therefore Mr. *S.* could not, who is no *Speculator* in these matters, but only as a *Testifier delivers down* these authorities to us as he *received them by hand* from Mr. *White*; and if the word *Tradition* be but in them, they are *Demonstrative.*

* Concil. Tom. 1.

* An. 347.

As for his *Testimonies* from the 2*d* Council of *Nice* (which he calls the *7th General Council*) who pretended their Doctrine of *Image-worship* to have descended to them by an *uninterrupted Tradition*, and proved it most doughtily by Texts of Scripture ridiculously wrested, by impertinent sayings out of obscure and counterfeit Authors, and by *fond* and *immodest Stories* (as is acknowledged by Pope * *Adrian* the *6th*) *of Apparitions* and *Womens Dreams*, &c. for which I refer the Reader to the *Council* it self; which is such a mess of Fopperies, that if a *general Council* of Atheists had met together with a design to abuse Religion by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually: I say, as for his Testimonies from this Council, I shall refer Mr. *S.* to that *Western Council* under *Charles the Great*, which a little after at *Franckfort* condemned, and also fully confuted the Decisions of this Council, calling their pretended *Tradition of Image-worship* [putidissimam Traditionem] *a most stinking Tradition.*

* Quodlibet 6. cited by *Espencæus* in 2*d* Epist. ad Tim. c. 4.

These are his Authorities from Councils; *Where* (says he) *we see General Councils relying on the Teaching of the Fathers or fore-going Church, and on the Churches Tradition as their Rule*, &c. Where does he *see*, any such matter? Or where does he *see General Councils*? Was the Council of *Lateran* a General one? Or was the Council of *Sardica*? If it was let

him ſhew how the 2*d* of *Nice* could be the 7*th General Council*. Mr. *White* muſt write more explicitely, and ſay which are *General Councils*, which not, otherwiſe he will lead his Friends into dangerous miſtakes.

§. 4. *After ancient Councils* (not ſo ancient neither) *let us* (ſays he) *give a glance at Fathers. Glance* is a modeſt word, and yet I doubt whether ever the *Fathers* had ſo much as that from him. Before I ſpeak particularly to his Teſtimonies from the *Fathers*, I ſhall mind him of what Mr. *Ruſhworth* ſays in general, *viz.* * *That he who ſeeks Tradition in the Fathers, and to convince it by their Teſtimony, takes an hard task upon him*, &c. Again *, *As in other Points, ſo even in this of the Reſolution of Faith, as Doctors ſeem to differ now-adays, ſo might the Fathers alſo.* If this be true, Mr. *S.* is not likely by a few Teſtimonies out of the *Fathers* to prove that *Tradition* is the ſole *Rule of Faith.* But let us ſee what he has done towards it.

* Dial. 3. Sect. 13.

* Ibid.

He begins with a ſaying of Pope *Celeſtine* to the Fathers of the *Epheſin* Council. *Now therefore we muſt act with a common endeavour to preſerve things believed, and retained to this very time by ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles. Binius*'s other *Reading* [of διδαχῆς for διαδοχῆς] quite ſpoils the *force* of this Citation which Mr. *S.* puts upon the word *Succeſſion.* But read it how he will; why may not the Chriſtian Doctrine be ſaid to come *by Succeſſion from the Apoſtles*, when it is tranſmitted to us by Scripture, as well as when by *Oral Tradition*? I am ſure the ſame *Celeſtine* in an *Epiſtle* to *Cyril*, commends him for defending the Faith by *Scripture*, *This* (ſays he) *is a great Triumph of our Faith, to demonſtrate our Opinions ſo ſtrongly, and to overthrow the contrary by Teſtimonies from Scripture.* And neither in this *Epiſtle*, nor the other, does he make any mention of *Oral Tradition.*

Next he cites that known place in *Irenæus*: *But what if the Apoſtles had not left us the Scriptures, ought we not to follow the Order of Tradition*, &c? This makes clearly againſt him; for it implies, that now the *Apoſtles* have *left us the Scriptures*, we ought to follow *them.* The other paſſage he cites out of *Ireneus. Lib.* 1. *c.* 3. is a clear eviction that he did not conſult the Book. For he puts two ſayings together which he had met with in Mr. *White*, immediately one after the other; and becauſe Mr. *White* had cited *Lib.* 1. *c.* 3. for the firſt ſaying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an (*Et rurſus*) *Again*, &c. Therefore Mr. *S.* (who is of a right Traditionary temper, which is to take things eaſily upon truſt himſelf, and require Demonſtration from others) concluded that theſe *ſayings* were in the ſame place, though in truth they are in ſeveral Books. As for the Teſtimony it ſelf, there is nothing in it to Mr. *S*'s purpoſe beſides the word *Tradition*, which *Irenæus* does often apply to Scripture as well as *Oral Tradition*; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to *Oral Tradition.*

His Teſtimonies out of *Origen* will do him leſs ſtead: For every one that hath been converſant in the Writings of that *Father*, knows what he means by the *Churches Tradition* preſerved *by order of Succeſſion*, *viz.* The myſtical Interpretations of Scripture, which (he ſays) were delivered by the Apoſtles to the Governors of the Church, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the *Tradition* Mr. *S.* contends for, *Origen* is at his ſervice; if it be not, I aſſure him he is not for his turn.

Next

Next comes *Tertullian*, concerning whom (as also *Origen*) the Papist upon occasion thinks it enough to reply in St. *Hierom's* words *, *As for* Tertullian, *I have nothing to say of him but that he is not a Man of the Church.* Whatever he was, these are his words, *If thou beest but a Christian, believe what is* [traditum] *delivered.* And here's nothing again but the word *delivered*; which (as I have said) is indifferent to *Written* or *Oral Tradition*, if the Circumstances do not determine it to one; as here they do (very unluckily for Mr. *S.*) to the *Scripture.* For he disputes here against *Marcion*, who denied the Flesh of Christ; and who to maintain that, denied his Nativity, and * expunged the whole History of it out of the Gospel; *But* (saith *Tertullian*) *by what authority dost thou this? If thou be a Prophet, foretel something; If an Apostle, preach publickly; If Apostolical, be of the Apostles mind; If no more but a Christian, believe what is delivered.* And where delivered? But in those *Instruments* or Books of the Gospel, out of which (as *Tertullian* immediately before tells us) *Marcion* had made bold to expunge this Story.

* Advers. Helvid.

* His opinionis consiliis tot Originalia Instrumenta Christi delere *Marcion* ausus est, ne Caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, oro te, autoritate, &c.

As for his Testimonies out of *Athanasius*, the two first of them prove nothing but that *Faith comes down from our Ancestors*, or was by them *delivered to us*; which no body denies: Nor is there a word in either of them concerning *Oral*, in opposition to *written Tradition.* The third Testimony is out of an *Epistle* to *Epictetus*, to whom *Athanasius* writing concerning those who held Christ's Body to be Consubstantial with his Divinity, tells him this was so gross a conceit, that it needed no solicitous confutation; but that it would be a sufficient answer to say in general the *Orthodox Church was not of that mind, our Fathers did not think so.* From whence Mr. *S.* infers that *Tradition is held by him a sole sufficient Rule of Faith, and the only Answer to be given why we reject Points from Faith*, &c. But if he had consulted the Book, he would not have inferred that this was *the only Answer to be given*, &c. For it immediately follows, *But lest from our being wholly silent, the Inventers of evil things should take occasion to be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few passages out of Scripture*, &c. And from thence he confutes them at large. It was so gross an Error that he thought it might be sufficient, without bringing particular Arguments out of Scripture against it, to say that it was contrary to the ancient Faith; but yet lest they should (if he had said no more) have taken boldness from thence, and thought that nothing more could be said against it, therefore he confutes it from particular Texts of Scripture. And what in his opinion was the *sufficient Rule of Faith*, Mr. *S.* might have seen at the beginning of this *Epistle* from these words, *That Faith which was professed by the Fathers in that Council* (viz. the *Nicene*) *according to the Scriptures, is to me sufficient*, &c. It seems that Scripture was to him the Rule and Standard whereby to judge even the *Creeds* of General Councils.

Mr. *S.* says he will be shorter in the rest, and so will I. For what is to be said to Testimonies brought at a venture? when he that brings them, had he read the Books themselves, could not have had the face to have brought them. Such is this out of * *Clem. Alexand.* *As if one of a Man becomes a Beast, like those infected with* Circe's *poyson; so he hath forfeited his being a Man of God and faithful to our Lord, who Spurns against Ecclesiastical Tradition, and leaps into Opinions of humane Election.* Mr. *S.* knows whose way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midst of a Text that sounds something towards his purpose, and leave out the rest which

* Stromat. L. 7.

which would make it evident to be meant just contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. *S.* whose implicit Faith were it not for his culpable Ignorance might excuse him. But for his Seducer Mr. *White*, how he can acquit himself of so foul an imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous Papist to judge when I have nakedly set the whole passage before him. *Clement* speaking of Hereticks who relinquish the Scripture, or abuse it by wresting it to their lusts, says, *Men who deal in matters of highest importance must need commit great Errours, if they do not take and hold the RULE OF FAITH from Truth it self. For such men having once deviated from the right way, do likewise err in most particulars; probably because they have not the Faculty of distinguishing Truths and Falshoods perfectly exercised to chuse what ought to be chosen. For if they had this, they would be ruled by the Divine SCRIPTURES,* [*Therefore as if any of Mankind should become a Beast; in such sort as those who were * bewitched by* Circe; *even so he hath lost his being a Man of God and abiding faithful to the Lord, who hath spurned against the Tradition of the Church, and skipt into the Opinions of humane Sects *,*] (*not* of humane Election, as Mr. *S.* blindly following Mr. *White* does most absurdly translate it) *but he that hath returned from his Errors, and hearkened to the SCRIPTURES, and conformed his life to the Truth, is as it were advanced from a Man to a God.* At the same rate he goes on for several Pages together, taking the Scriptures for an *indemonstrable Principle*, from which all Divine Doctrines are to be demonstrated, and for the *Criterion* whereby they are to be tried; and charges the Hereticks in such words as we cannot find fitter for our Adversaries, *As* (says he) *naughty Boys shut out their School-master, so these drive the Prophecies out of the Church, suspecting that they will chide and admonish them; and they patch together abundance of falshoods and fictions, that they may seem RATIONALLY not to admit the Scriptures.* Again, speaking of these Hereticks affronting the Scriptures, he tells us *they oppose the * Divine Tradition with humane Doctrines * by other Traditions* [*delivered from hand to hand*] *that they may establish a Sect or Heresie.* Again he says, *they adulterate the Truth, and steal the Rule of Faith,* &c. *but for ORAL Frauds they shall have WRITTEN Punishments.* But enough of this; whosoever desires to see more of it, let him read on where these Men to their own shame have directed us, and see whether any Protestant can speak more fully and plainly in this Controversie. The whole trust of the Papists is upon the equivocal sense of the word *Tradition*. Which word is commonly used by the *Fathers* to signifie to us the Scripture or *Divine Tradition* as *Clement* here calls it; but the *Papists* understand it of their *unwritten Tradition*, and to this they apply all those passages in the *Fathers* where Tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. *L.* deals with us in the Testimonies I have already examined: And there is nothing of argument in those few which remain but from the ambiguity of this Word; which I need not shew of every one of them in particular, for whosoever shall read them with this Key will find that they are of no fore to conclude what he drives at.

* φαρμαχθέ-ντ[illegible]

* αἱρέσεων.

* θεῖα παραδόσει.

* δι ἑτέρων παρεγχειρήσεων.

§. 5. As for his Citations out of the Council of *Trent*, by which he would prove it to be the perswasion of their present Church, that *Tradition* is the sole *Rule of Faith*; I have already shewn that that Council hath declared otherwise, and is otherwise understood by the chief of their own *Writers*. And therefore he did prudently to conceal in an, *&c.*

those

those choaking words, in which the *Council* declares it self to *receive and honour, with equal pious affection and reverence, the Books of Scripture and unwritten Traditions.* And after a deal of shuffling, what a pitiful Account is it that he at last gives of that Council's putting Scripture constantly before *Tradition*, because Scripture being interpreted by *Tradition*, is of the same Authority *as if an Apostle or Evangelist were present, and therefore no wonder they honour Scripture-Testimony so as to put it before Tradition*; which is to say, that because Scripture is subordinate to *Tradition* and to be regulated by it, therefore it deserves to be put before it. Besides, if *Scripture* and *Tradition* be but several ways of conveying the Evangelical and Apostolical Doctrine, why should he imagine an *Evangelist* or *Apostle* to be more present by the Scripture than by *Oral Tradition*? Especially if it be considered, that he supposes Scripture to be an uncertain, and Tradition an infallible way of conveying this Doctrine.

## SECT. II.

§. 1. ALL that now remains, is to confirm the precedent *Discourse* by Testimonies of the most eminent Persons of the Church, in several Ages, in which I shall not need to be large, being so happily prevented by that full Account which is given, of the sense of the *Ancients* in this matter in the *Answer* to *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*; which Mr. *S.* may if he please consult for his farther Conviction. Testimonies on the behalf of Scripture.

§. 2. I begin with the Historical Account which *Eusebius* gives of committing the *Gospel* to Writing; which is to this purpose, *viz.* * *That the* Romans *were not content with the Doctrine Preached, unless it were also committed to Writing; and therefore did earnestly beg of* Mark, Peter's *Companion, that he would leave them a Monument in writing of that Doctrine which had been delivered to them by word of mouth. And this was the occasion of the Writing of St.* Mark's Gospel. *And when* Peter *did understand that this Work was publish'd (being suggested by the Divine Revelation of the Holy Spirit) it is said he was very much pleased with the ready and earnest desire of those Persons; and that by his Authority he confirmed this Writing, to the end that it might be every where read in the Church.* As for St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, he tells us *, *That of all the Disciples they two only have left monuments in Writing; of whom it is also reported they betook themselves to write, being drawn thereto by necessity.* Matthew *after he had Preached the Word of God to the* Jews, *and was resolved to go to other Nations, wrote his* Gospel *in the Language of his Country; and thus by the diligence and pains of Writing, did abundantly supply the want of his presence to those whom he left. And when* Mark *and* Luke *had published their Gospel, it is reported that* John *(who had always used to preach the Word without writing it) being at length wrought upon by the same reason did betake himself to write.* From this account it is clear, that the Apostles thought it necessary for the preservation and secure conveyance of the Christian Doctrine, that it should be put into Writing; and that they judged this a better way to supply the want of their presence, than *Oral Tradition.* Therefore the same *Author* tells us * '*That the Disciples, who immediately succeeded the Apostles, as they travelled to Preach the Gospel to those who had not yet heard the Word of Faith, did with great care* care also deliver to them the writings *of the Holy Evangelists.* Again *, *That* Ignatius *as he travelled towards* Rome (*where*

* Histor. Eccles. l. 2. c. 14.

* Ibid. l. 3. c. 18.

* Ib. c. 31.

* Ib. c. 30.

(*where he was to suffer*) *exhorted the Churches of every City to hold fast the Tradition of the Apostles*; *which* (*as also by Writing he testified*) *for greater security* he held necessary *to be* copied in Writing.

§. 3. That the Hereticks of Old made the same pretence which the Papists make now, of *Oral Tradition* in opposition to *Scripture*, the same *Eusebius* tells us; and withal, that *Books* are a sufficient confutation of this pretence *. *Those* (says he) *who were of the Heresie of* Artemon, *said that all their* Fore-fathers *and the* Apostles themselves *had* received *and* taught *the same things which they also did*; *and had preserved the* true Teaching *unto the time of* Victor *Bishop of* Rome, *whose Successour* Zephyrinus *corrupted it. And this* (saith he) *would have great probability, were it not first of all contradicted by the Scripture*; *and next if there did not remain the Writings of other Brethren much more ancient than* Victor's *time*, &c. *in the Books of all whom Christ's Divinity is acknowledged.* And afterwards he tells us that these Hereticks did change and corrupt the Scriptures to bring them to their Opinions; so Mr. *S.* tells us that *the outward Letter of Scripture* ought to be corrected *by Tradition and Sense written in mens Hearts.*

* Ibid. L. 5. c. 27.

St. *Hierom* also tells us *, That *the Hereticks were wont to say, we are the Sons of the Wise, who did from the beginning deliver down to us the Apostolical Doctrine*; but he adds, *that the true Sons of* Judah *adhere to the Scripture.*

* Comment. in Isa. c. 19.

§. 4. That Scripture is sufficiently plain in all things necessary.

*St.* Chrysostome *, *All things in the Divine Scriptures are plain and streight. Whatsoever things are necessary are manifest.*

* In 2 Thess. c. 2. Hom. 4.

St. *Austin* having spoken of the profoundness of Scripture, adds *, *Not that those things which are necessary to Salvation are so hard to be come at: But* (saith he) *when one hath there attained Faith without which there is no pious and right living, there are besides, many dark and mysterious things,* &c. Again *, *The manner of Speech in Scripture, how easie is it to all us, though few can penetrate to the bottom of it? Those things which it plainly contains, it speaks without disguise like a familiar Friend to the heart of the learned and unlearned.* How will Mr. *S.* reconcile this with his great Exception against Scripture? And what these things are, which are *plainly* contained in Scripture, the same *Father* tells us else-where in these words *, *Among those things which are plainly set down in Scripture, all those things are to be found which comprehend Faith and good Manners.* The same St. *Austin* (as also *Clement* in the Book which Mr. *White* quoted) for the understanding of obscure Texts of Scripture directs us not to *Tradition*, but to the plain Text without which he expresly says * *there would be no way to understand them.*

* Epist. 3.

* Ibid.

* De Doctr. Christ. L. 2. c. 9.

* De Unitat. Eccles. c. 5.

§. 5. That Scripture is so plain, as to be fit to determine Controversies.

*Justin* sure thought so, when disputing with *Trypho*, concerning a point wherein the *Jew* had *Tradition* on his side, he told him *he would bring such proofs* (to the contrary) *as no Man could gain-say: Attend* (says he) *to what I shall recite out of the Holy Scriptures, proofs which need not to be explained, but only to be heard.* Mr. *White* might have found likewise much to this purpose in his *Clement.*

But

But not to tire my Reader in a Point which the Ancients abound with, I shall only produce the judgment of *Constantine* * in that solemn *Oration* of his to the Council of *Nice*; wherein he bewails their *mutual oppositions, especially in Divine things*; concerning which they had *the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Recorded in Writing*; *For* (says he) *the Books of the Evangelists and Apostles, and the Oracles of the Old Prophets, do evidently teach us what we ought to think of the Divine Majesty. Therefore laying aside all seditious contention, let us determine the matters in question by Testimonies out of the Divine Writings.* Not a word of any other Tradition but Scripture, which was held evident enough in those days, though now Mr. *S.* tells us it is not sufficient to decide that Controversie about the *Divinity of Christ.*

* Theodoret. Hist. L. 1. c. 7.

§. 6. Lastly, That Scripture is the *Rule of Faith.*

Irenæus *, *The method of our Salvation we have not known by any other but those Men by whom the Gospel came to us, which then they Preached, but afterwards by the Will of God delivered it to us in the Scriptures, to be for the future the foundation and pillar of our Faith.*

* L. 3. c. 1.

St. *Cyprian* the Church hath ever held a good Catholick; yet Mr. *S.* * takes notice that he erred in a Point of Faith, and perhaps the rather, because Mr. *Rushworth* * had told him that he was not theirs in this Controversie. *For* (says he) *St.* Cyprian *seems to think that the Resolution of Faith was to be made into Scripture, and not into Tradition.* But that we may not seem to accept of this of courtesie from him, nor yet wholly to despise it, I shall offer this one Testimony instead of many out of that *Father*; who being opposed with an Argument from Tradition, demands *, *Whence have you that Tradition? Comes it from the Authority of the Lord, and of the Gospel, or from the Epistles of the Apostles? For God testifies that we are to do those things which are written,* &c. *If it be commanded in the Gospel, or contained in the Epistles or Acts of the Apostles, then let us observe it as a Divine and Holy Tradition.*

* P. 1[illegible].
* Dial. 3. Sect. 13.
* Epist. 74.

*Hilary* * commends *Constantius* the Emperor *for regulating his Faith only according to those things which are written.* And to oblige him to deserve this commendation, he adds; *he who refuseth this is Antichrist, and who dissembles in it is Anathema.*

* Ad Con[illegible] l. 1.

* *Optatus*, concerning the Controversie with the *Donatists*, asks who shall be Judge? and answers himself, *the Scriptures:* Which he illustrates by the similitude of a Father who delivered his Will orally to his Children while he was living, but when he was dying, caused it to be written *in lasting Tables*, to decide all Controversies that might happen among them after his death. The passage is large, and it is obvious to apply it.

* L. 5. de Schism. Donat.

*Basil* maintaining the *Doxology* as it was used in his days, says *, *Thus we received it from our Fathers*; but adds immediately, *This is not enough for us, that it is the Tradition of the Fathers, for they followed the Authority of the Scriptures, making its Testimonies the Principles upon which they built.* He has indeed in the same *Book* * a passage much insisted on by the Papists concerning unwritten Traditions; but withal, he says those Traditions were *secretly* conveyed, which makes all the rest of no use to Mr. *S.*

* De Sp. Sancto c. 7.
* C. 27.

*Chrysostome* * having mentioned several Heresies, directs how they may be avoided, *viz. By attending to the Faith delivered, and looking upon all that disagrees from that as Adulterate. For* (says he) *as those who* give

* Hom. 8. in Epist. ad Heb. c. 5.

*give Rules do not p[...] upon a curious inquiry after many measures, but bid them keep to the Rule given; so is it in Opinions. *But no Body will attend to the Scriptures; if we did, we should not only not fall into Errors our selves, but also rescue those that are deceived. Again *, If we should be throughly conversant in the Scriptures, we should be instructed both in right Opinions and a good Life.* Again, among the many *Sects of Christians* * *it will be easie to judge* of the right, *if we believe the Scriptures, because these are plain and true; If any one agree with these, he is a Christian; if he contradicts them, he is far from this Rule.*

* Hom. 52. in Joh.

* Hom. 33. in Act. Apost.

St. *Austin* calls the Scripture * the *Divine Ballance* for the weighing of Doctrines. Again, *the Holy Scripture* (says he) *fixeth the Rule of our Doctrine.* And accordingly himself uses it both in his Dispute with *Maximinus*, to whom he says *, *Neither ought I now to alledge the* Nicene *Council, nor thou that of* Ariminum; *for neither am I bound to the Authority of the one, nor thou of the other. Let us both contest with the Authorities of Scripture which are Witnesses common to us both.* And also against the *Donatists* in these words *, *Let them if they can demonstrate their Church not by the Talk and Rumors* [*or* Oral Tradition] *of the* Africans, *not by the Councils of their own Bishops, not by the Books of their Disputers, not by deceitful Miracles,* &c. *but by the prescript of the Law, Prophets,* &c. *i. e. by all the Canonical Authorities of the Holy Books.*

* De Bapt. Dont. Donat. L. 2. c. 6.

*Contr. Max. L. 3.

* De Unitat. Eccles. c. 16.

Hierom *saith* *, *Of those things, which without the Authorities and Testimonies of the Scripture, Men invent of their own heads as from Apostolical Tradition, they are smitten with the Sword of God.*

* Comment. in Agg. c. 1.

*Theophilus Alexandr.* whom *Hierom* hath Translated, calls Scripture more than once * *the Rule*, and the *Testimonies* of it the *firm foundations of Doctrine.* And again saith *, *It comes from a Demoniacal spirit that men follow the Sophisms of humane minds, and think any thing Divine that wants the Authority of Scripture.*

* Paschal. L. 3.
* L. 2.

*Theodoret* * charges all Heresies upon the not following of Scripture, which he calls *the inflexible Rule of Truth.* Again, *We have learned the Rule of Opinions from the Divine Scripture.*

* Hæret. Fabul. L. 5.

After the Fathers, I shall produce the Testimonies of two Eminent Persons of latter Times, *Gerson* and *Lyra.*

*Gerson* in his * *Book of the Tryal of Doctrines*, hath this remarkable passage; *In the Tryal of Doctrines, that which is first and principally to be considered, is, Whether a Doctrine be conformable to the Holy Scripture, &c. The reason of this is, because the Scripture is deliver'd to us as a SUFFICIENT and INFALLIBLE RULE for the Government of the whole Ecclesiastical Body and its Members to the end of the world. So that it is such an Art, such a Rule or Exemplar, that any other Doctrine which is not conformable to it, is to be renounc'd as Heretical, or to be accounted suspicious, or not at all appertaining to Religion. Again,* * *It is evident how pernicious the rejection of the Holy Scripture is, and how certain a preparatory for the reception of Antichrist. Once more,* * *What mischief, what danger, what confusion hath happened through contempt of the Holy Scripture, which sure is sufficient for the Government of the Church (else Christ must have been an imperfect Law-giver) let us ask experience,* &c.

* Part. 1. Consid. 2.

* De Distinct. Verar. Visi-on. à falsis.
* Serm. in die Circum-cis. &c.

*Lyra* also writes thus *; *As in Philosophy, truth is discovered by reducing things to their first and self-evident Principles; so in the Writings delivered by the Holy Doctors, Truth is discovered as to matters of Faith, by reducing them to the Canonical Scriptures.*

* Prolog. de Lib. Bib. &c.

Sir,

Sir, *You know how easie it were to swell up a large Volume, with Testimonies to this purpose; especially if I should take the course that Mr.* White *does, to hale in quotations though never so impertinent; or use the wretched importunity which Mr.* S. *does to perswade them to be pertinent. But these Testimonies which I have nakedly set down, leaving them to speak for themselves, are enough to satisfie an unpassionate Reader, such an one as dares trust himself with the use of his own* Eyes *and* Reason. *As for that sort of Men which chuse to follow* noise *rather than* light, *we must be content to leave them to the blind conduct of those Guides, who having no better means to keep their Followers to them, go* halloing *in the dark, and fill their ears with the insignificant sounds of* Infallibility, Indefectibility, Self-evidence *and* Demonstration.

*Concerning the* Appendix *wherein you are particularly challeng'd, I hope for an Account very shortly, and so take leave,*

Sir,

Your Affectionate,

Friend,

*JOHN TILLOTSON.*

Lincoln-Inn,
*Febr.* 20,
1665.

A N

# AN Alphabetical Table, OR THE Chief *MATTERS*, or *THINGS*, Contained in this VOLUME.

## A.



f Eeeee

Chastity,

Con-

D.

Fffff F.

F.



G.



Gods,

Idolatry

N.

N.



O.



P.

# THE TABLE.



Prin-

## S.

T.

X.

X.



Y.



Z.



FINIS.